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FROM THE TOP

FINALLY, THE VIEW FROM THE BOTTOM



DOUBLE TROUBLE Like our intern Miguel, Shinji (center) has many issues to work through.

Two issues ago, *Anime Insider* showed you how to break into the anime industry, but we forgot to mention something important, in my opinion: the wonderful world of interning!

I've been the *Anime Insider* intern for over a year now. Despite the job's perks, being an anime journalist intern has some amazing ups and downs that the public should know about.

My job, for instance, includes managing our immense anime and manga libraries and writing everything you see on our Website. A few written features are passed my way each issue, but most of my time is spent researching obscure gaps of information in unfinished articles, taking volumes of screen captures just to find the right images, and compiling lots and lots of lists, with the most mind-numbing but necessary minutiae.

That's the fun stuff. Once a week, I get to wash associate editor Trisha Sebastian's car in the parking lot and feed caviar to senior editor Doug Goldstein's cats. In the afternoons, I have to hold managing editor Robert Bricken's hair while he throws up his "six-scotch lunch."

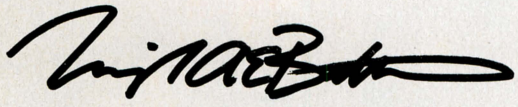
Also, I don't get paid.

But I'm not complaining. I love anime, I love writing about it, I love helping promote it, and I love being part of *Anime Insider*.

If you want my job, you have to love anime that much—enough to even do the stuff that sucks, all the mindnumbing work that doesn't directly end up in the magazine (although to be fair, Trisha does edit better when she has a clean car).

And if you want to take *my* intern position, you'll have to find a way to work for less than free! Suckas!

Sincerely,



Miguel A.E. Betita
The Wonder Intern

P.S. *Evangelion* rules!

MASTHEAD

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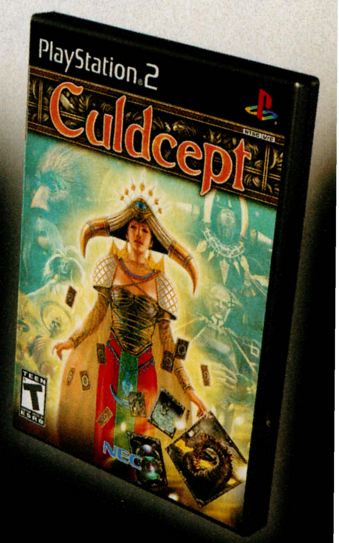
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ANIMAIL!

YOU'RE FANS, YOUR MAIL

Rumors! In every corner of anime fandom, they're bound to exist. Here at "Animail," we take pride in debunking rumors. In this edition alone, we tackle rumors concerning a possible* Yu Yu Hakusho *romance and Rei Ayanami's existence in the lyrics of a former Top 40 song. Oh, we love debunking those rumors.

However, there's one thing we love even more than debunking rumors, and that's starting rumors! Issue #8's "Animail" proclamation that* Pokémon's *Ash gets eaten by Squirtles in the final episode—while Misty gets married to Meowth—has taken on a life of its own. It was just a joke, folks! We promise Ash doesn't get eaten by Squirtles.

Brock *gets eaten by Squirtles.*





DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I watched the first DVD of *Fruits Basket*, and I can tell you two things:

1. There is no fruit.
2. There is no basket.

Not that I was dying to see fruit baskets or anything, but what's the point of that title? Shouldn't it be *Orphan Befriends Zodiac Freaks*?

Anthony Maines
Little Rock, AR

There's no better source to ask than* TOKYOPOP*'s Jake Forbes, who edits the* Fruits Basket *manga. "The title* Fruits Basket *is the name of a game that [series heroine] Tohru played in kindergarten," Forbes explains. "The children are all given the name of a fruit, and when their fruit name is called out, they're 'it.'"

But the connection is deeper than that, as Forbes points out: "The game is symbolic of Tohru's feeling of being an outsider. When she played it as a child, the boys named her an* onigiri*—a rice ball. So the message is, there's no room for an onigiri in a fruit basket."

Now I can't stop thinking about Ralph Wiggum shouting "Go, banana!" What were we talking about again?

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

My brother tells me that in the Will Smith song "Miami," there is a line in the chorus that goes "Mi amo Ayanami," Spanish for "My master Ayanami," which is a shout-out to *Neon Genesis Evangelion*! Is this true? Is Will Smith an *Evangelion* fan?

Samantha Rowe
via cyberspace

It's actually "Bienvenido a Miami," or "Welcome to Miami." I curse you for making me look up Will Smith lyrics. And your brother is a dork.

But hey, speaking of* Evangelion*...

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I'm a big *Evangelion* fan and so are my friends, but we always end up arguing about it. No, we don't argue about all the hidden meanings or what the heck the last two TV episodes were supposed to mean—we argue about how to pronounce "Evangelion"! Can you settle this debate for us?

Jenny Rayburn
Mountain View, CA

This subject just came up during a conversation I had with ADV co-founder (and* Evangelion*'s English-language director) Matt Greenfield. Why'd it come up? Because I kept pronouncing "Evangelion" wrong and he finally had to correct me.

So here's the deal: It's pronounced AY-van-gell-ee-un. The first syllable is "ay" and not "ee," and the "g" sound is like "guts," not "germ." According Greenfield, "evangelion" is a Greek word. ("Neon Genesis Evangelion" is literally "first book of the new gospel.") "If you go by the Greek, then you go by the Greek pronunciation, where 'e' is pronounced 'ay,'" Greenfield says. Furthermore, even the Japanese don't get it completely right. "You cannot pronounce a Greek word accurately in Japanese. It's not possible. The language structures are too different. The 'v' sound is not really the same sound there, so it comes out a little different."

HEY AI,

I was wondering, do any manga-ka, animators or voice actors/actresses have



birthdays on October 23? You see, it's my birthday and the only person with a recognizable name who shares it is some country (bleaaaaaaaaaugh!!!!) singer.

Ooo, does an *AI* staff member have that b-day?

Yulie
via cyberspace

I couldn't find any anime/manga creators or actors with an October 23 birthday, but it might interest you to know that Nakuru from* Card Captor Sakura *and Piyoko from* Di Gi Charat *share your birthday. If readers want to look up their own birthdays, check out this excellent Website: www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Ginza/7551/bday_index.html

Here's who else was born on October 23: Johnny Carson, "Weird Al" Yankovic and movie directors Ang Lee (*The Hulk*) and Sam Raimi (*Spider-Man*)!

Sadly, no* AI *staffers have an October 23 birthday. But guess who shares my birthday? Actress Asia Argento and wrestler Stephanie McMahon! Hmm. I think I want a new birthday.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I live in a boring place. Nothing amazing ever happens. Do you think there's a possibility that a girl with pink hair riding a yellow scooter will come out of the sky and hit me with a guitar? Maybe then my life would be more interesting.

(If possible, could I get Haruko-san's phone number?)

Richard Hartshorn
Dyken Pond, NY

If you bought a scooter, a pink wig and a guitar, I'm sure you could find a girl willing to ride by and smash you over the head. However, real life isn't like anime. Instead of being simply bored, you'd now be bored with a concussion.

I think I have Haruko's phone number in my Rolodex. But is it under "H" for "Haruhara" or "F" for "FLCL"? Oh, there it is. Okay, first you dial 011, and then the country code...no wait...you drop the first zero...then 03...no wait.

These international numbers drive me crazy. I'm going to have to get back to you.

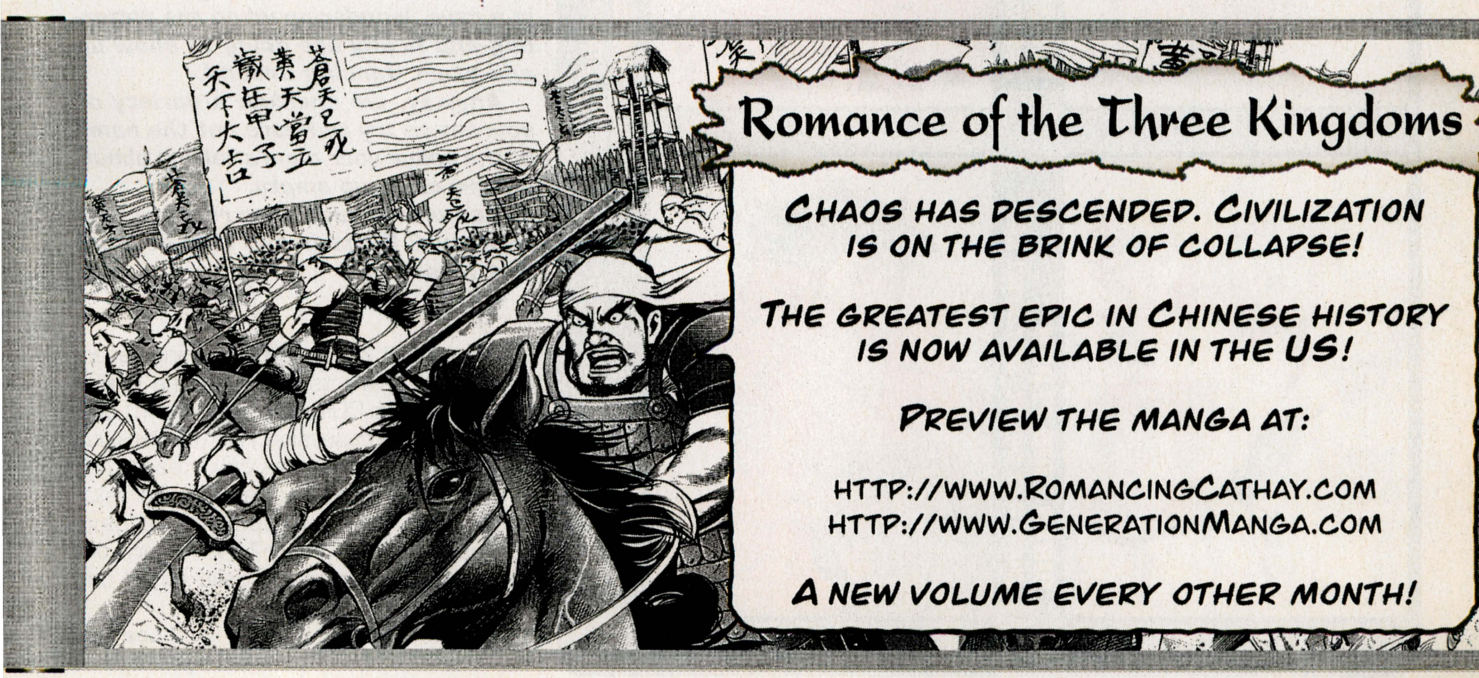
Cosplay Cavalcade

USADA FROM 'DI GI CHARAT'

BY KATIE URBANOVSKY

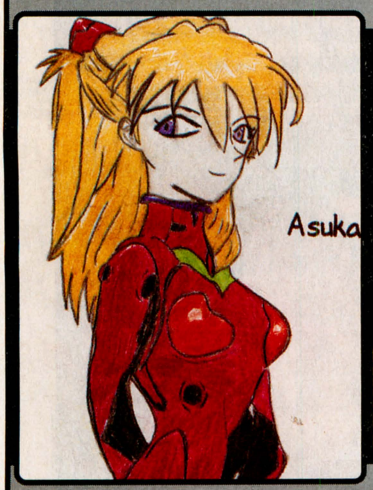
Katie's decided to play it cool with her costume; she's chosen to dress as Usada, the mild-mannered alter ego of Dejiko's wild rival, Rabi~en~Rose! Like Usada, Katie has dreams of being an anime idol—but she's gone the sensible route of not enraging any feisty alien princesses. Dare you join the Cosplay Cavalcade? Send your pics—high resolution, please—to *Anime Insider*!





FAN ART

Wanna prove to the anime world just what an underappreciated *artiste* you are? Then send us your artwork, preferably in color and on non-lined paper, to Anime Insider, 151 Wells Ave., Congers, NY 10920, or send it via e-mail to animeinsider@aol.com. All submissions MUST include the character name(s) and YOUR full name and address, including city and state. Booyaka!



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TONY MARINO, KNOXVILLE, TN



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SAKURA
LINDSAY HAMILTON, TORRINGTON, CT



DIRTY PAIR FLASH
SHASTA M. DANIEL, SAN DIEGO, CA



JING
REBEKAH SHAW, BASTROP, TX

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

Are Kurama and Hiei from *Yu Yu Hakusho* gay? People on the Internet say so.

Tiffany Liang
North Stonington, CT

Here's what you need to understand about the Internet: it's 94 percent total crap.

And here's what you need to understand about Kurama and Hiei: they're just pals. Although they never hook up in the anime, they do stand around half-naked a lot, so that rumor is no surprise.

We also stand around half-naked in the* Anime Insider *offices a lot, but trust us, there's no hanky-panky going on. And when I say none, I mean a certain amount.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I am having a bit of a problem. I am trying to find an anime movie, but my mother, who told me about it, doesn't remember the title. It's a story about a firefly and a waterbug who love each other but can't be near each other. She thought it was *Grave of the Fireflies*, but that was not it. That was horribly sad. If you could help us out it would be most appreciated.

Mica Critchfield
via cyberspace

Oh. My. God.

I can just picture you and your mom watching* Grave of the Fireflies, *as two kids in WWII-era Japan starve in a cave, wondering when the waterbug and firefly are going to show up and start dancing around.

Anyway, we checked a variety of sources to try to figure out the name of the anime your mom's talking about, but we came up empty.

Can one of you other readers help Mica out? Write in and help us solve this mystery!

DEAR AI,

I'm a girl who's interested in learning Japanese, but my parents won't buy me one of those expensive CDs. (My parents don't support my anime obsession.) Do you think you could give me a few sites that'll teach me?

And also, could you ask Rumiko Takahashi what would happen if you gave Inu-Yasha peanut butter? Will it turn out to be hilarious like if you gave a real dog peanut butter?

Lee-Lee
via cyberspace

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Mild Language
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As seen on CARTOON NETWORK

PlayStation 2

BANDAI

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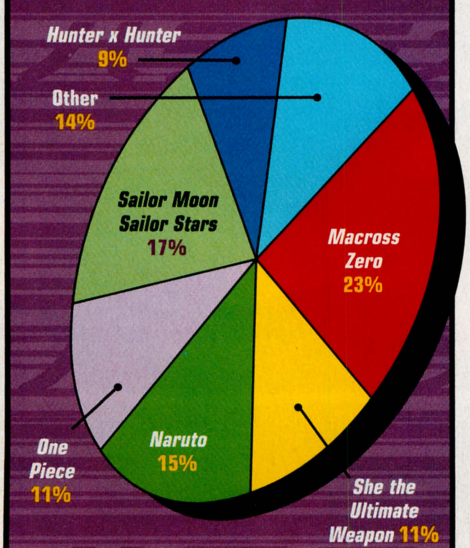
WORDS FOR THE WISE

WANNA KNOW WHAT ALL THESE FANS ARE BLATHERING ABOUT?

BAKA—[BAH-kah] Japanese for "idiot." A popular Japanese word learned by anime newbies.
BENTO—[BEN-tow] A cold lunch served in a box with different compartments; often carried to school by students.
DAIJOUBU—[DIE-joe-boo] "It's okay" or "I'm okay." An easy word to pick out when watching anime.
HENTAI—[HEN-tie] Japanese for "pervert" or "perverted." Refers to naughty anime and manga too.
KINOU—[KEE-noh] Yesterday.
KYOU—[KYOH] Today.
MANGA—[MAHN-ga] Japanese comic books.
MANGA-KA—[MAHN-ga KA] Japanese word for creator of manga.
MOCHIRON—[MOE-chee-ron] "Of course!"
OTAKU—[o-TAH-koo] Hardcore anime fan. If you have a tattoo, you probably are one.
SEIYUU—[SAY-yoo] A voice actor or actress.
SENSEI—[SEN-say] Teacher on instructor. Also used as an honorific: "Onizuka-sensei."
SHÔNEN—[SHO-nehn] An adjective meaning "for boys." Shônen manga, shônen anime, etc. Shôjo is the equivalent meaning "for girls." ■ TR

WEBPOLL

WHICH SERIES DO YOU MOST WANT TO GET LICENSED?



Fill out the latest poll at www.anime-insider.com!

Try japanese-online.com for starters. That will let you try out some basics to see if you enjoy studying Japanese. Another good beginner site is members.aol.com/writejapan, which is a tutorial on writing Japanese characters.

If you're serious about your studies, no free online resource will be enough.* Japanese for Busy People *is a great textbook from the Association for Japanese-Language Teaching, published by Kodansha International. This is the text I used in school. Yay! I see it at bookstores all the time, but you can buy it new for $17 or so at amazon.com, or find a used copy for even less.

What if you gave Inu-yasha peanut butter, and you gave Kyoko chocolate, and then they kissed? Wooooooooo!

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

I know this may seem strange, but I like to watch *Sailor Moon*. Is there anything wrong with a guy watching *Sailor Moon*? Am I the only one? Please help!

Matt Lockwood
Martinsville, IN

Sorry Matt, I'm afraid your only recourse is to get a sex-change operation. Because if you watch* Sailor Moon*, you're a giiiiirl!

No, I'm just kidding. Sure,* Sailor Moon *is a show about girls, created by a girl, intended for girls, but it's a show everyone can enjoy. For one thing, it's very funny. For another thing, the romance is balanced out by fighting in every single episode. Yes, there are lots of scenes of the girls getting moony-eyed over boys, but there are also lots of scenes of monsters. People fall in love, but people also get killed!

Sailor Moon* *arrived in North America at a time when few other cartoons on the air had any sort of episode-to-episode continuity or depth of emotion, so viewers of both genders embraced it. Don't be ashamed.

On a related note, I happen to watch* Gilmore Girls*! Sometimes I pretend I'm dating a Gilmore Girl. And sometimes, I pretend that I am a Gilmore Girl.

DEAR ANIME INSIDER,

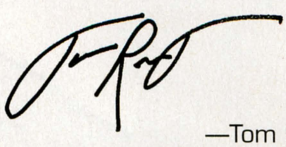
Know who Saya from *Blood: The Last Vampire* reminds me of in real life? Rachael Leigh Cook!



Meg Blake
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Mmm. I think I'm going to imagine Rachael Leigh Cook in a sailor suit for a while.

Okay, gotta go! And with that, it's time to wrap up another issue's worth of reader mail. Keep those letters coming! Without you guys, we'd have to use this space for something else. Like classified ads. Hey, look, a garage sale!



—Tom Root

Let it be known that Tom Root's tombstone shall read: "Here lies Tom Root. Eaten by Squirtles.

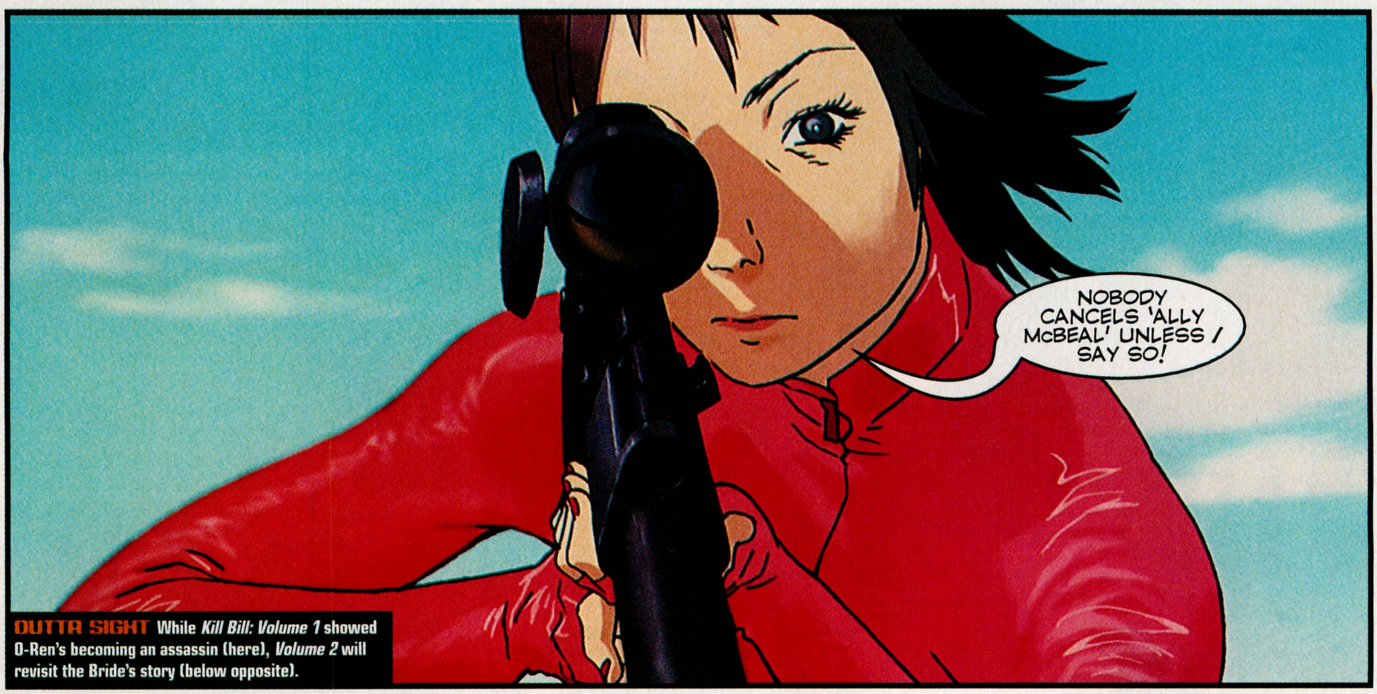
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INSIDER NEWS+NOTES

A VIEW TO A 'KILL'

Tarantino's Love of Anime Bleeds Surprises in 'Kill Bill: Volume 2'



OUTTA SIGHT While *Kill Bill: Volume 1* showed O-Ren's becoming an assassin (here), *Volume 2* will revisit the Bride's story (below opposite).

Slash, stab, blood, blood, blood! That's what Quentin Tarantino has in store for anime fans on February 20, when *Kill Bill: Volume 2* storms its way into movie theaters, once again bringing the art of anime directly into mainstream U.S.A.

For anyone who saw *Volume 1* last year, this shouldn't be a surprise. The ultra-violent story of revenge is Tarantino's nod to his favorite movie genres, from spaghetti westerns to kung-fu gore-fests. The Production I.G.-animated segment showing the origin of Lucy Liu's assassin O-Ren had anime fans cheering.

Producer (and longtime QT pal) Lawrence Bender played it close to the vest when asked for specific details about the anime sequence in *Volume 2*, saying that as of Thanksgiving, "the anime is complete for the second volume. But we're still editing the movie, so I'm not 100 percent sure of what is going to make it in the final cut."

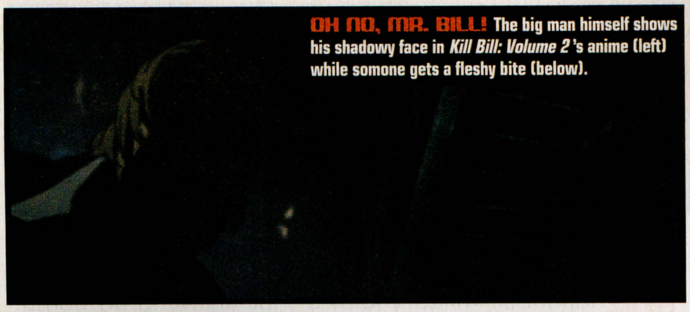
One thing Tarantino will reveal is that the next *Kill Bill* won't disappoint fans of ultra-violent flicks, be they live action or anime.

"It's still pretty f—ing violent, but there's not a 14-minute [anime] sequence there," he said. "Now, human stuff starts getting into it. It's not just killing them all the way down the list and it gets more complicated, it gets complex now. It's not quite as easy [as *Volume 1* was]."

"There are a couple of amazing action sequences in it," Bender elaborated gleefully. "There is an amazing fight between Uma [Thurman, the film's vengeful bride] and Daryl [Hanna as Elle—her would-be assassin] that just rocks. And the way Michael Madsen [Budd] dies is really, really cool."

The two men also agree that the anime sequence in *Volume 2* won't be as violent as in the first film. "The anime in *Volume 2* isn't quite as bloody as in the first volume," Bender revealed. "The sequence will stylistically be very similar. Different scenes, of course, but similar style. And a different segment of the story, of course."

That anime style is the result of the collaboration between Tarantino and Japanese anime studio Production I.G., chosen by Tarantino because of his admiration for their earlier works, including *Ghost in the Shell* and *Blood: The Last Vampire*. There were two directors that collaborated on the *Kill Bill* anime sequences: Kazuto Nakazawa, whose previous



OH NO, MR. BILL! The big man himself shows his shadowy face in *Kill Bill: Volume 2*'s anime (left) while somone gets a fleshy bite (below).



credits include *El Hazard* and the new *Samurai Champloo*, and Toshihiko Nishikubo, of *Ghost in the Shell* fame.

The process for creating the *Kill Bill* anime sequences was as unorthodox as Tarantino is as a person. Forget the traditional way of storyboards; Tarantino admits he "can't really draw" and so made his vision known in a very different way.

"What I did is I wrote it exactly, shot for shot for shot, every visual connected with this and this and this," he explained. So, I wrote a big, long, detailed script broken down into shots like you would do with a storyboard. Then I got together with the animators and proceeded in six hours to act out all of the cartoon. I was like, 'Here are all of the shots,' and I acted out each of the shots."

"I was careful to stay close to what Quentin had in mind," emphasized Nakazawa. "The type of art was selected by me personally, bearing in mind the technique that I thought was the closest to what he had in mind when we had our creative meeting in Tokyo. Basically, we chose the art, and they chose the context and character performances."

He revealed that working with Tarantino was "difficult and also fun, but more work than usual," especially because "this anime sequence didn't have much budget either."

Nakazawa also dropped us a hint about what will be in the *Volume 2* anime sequence, when he said, "I haven't seen the final cut yet, but some wedding chapel scenes in the opening that were not in Part 1 should be in Part 2."

The rest of the secrets of the new anime in *Kill Bill: Volume 2* will be revealed in February, but Nakazawa is certain of one thing—that Quentin Tarantino has definitely helped bring anime one step closer to wide acceptance in America as a bona fide art form, with *Volume 1* and its follow-up breaking new ground.

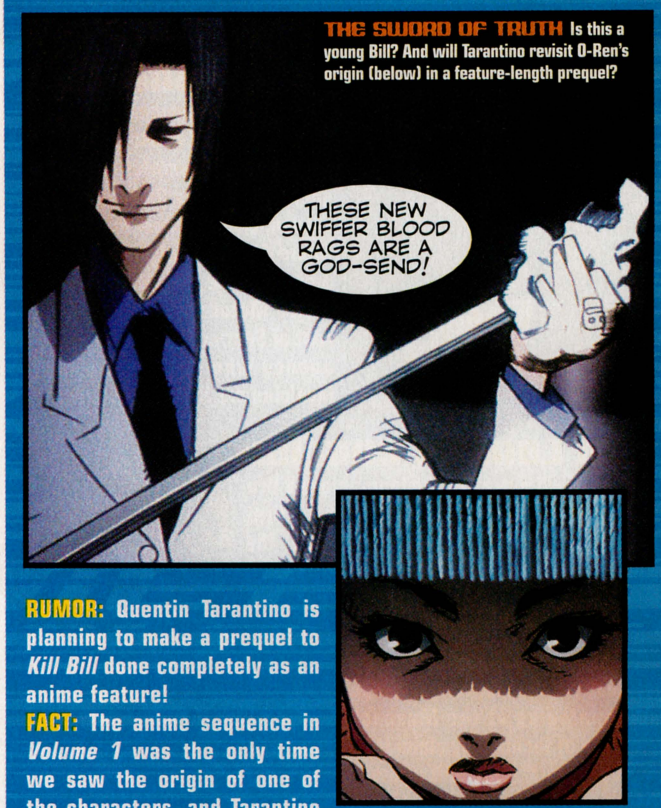
"We wanted to create something that can be enjoyed by all groups of people regardless of their age, and we feel that we have accomplished our mission," he said. "Not only the anime fans but other audiences seemed to have enjoyed the film equally." ■ Jenny Peters



THE BRIDE

RUMOR 'BILL'

YOU'VE HEARD THE GOSSIP. NOW LEARN THE TRUTH BEHIND THE 'KILL BILL' ANIME



THE SWORD OF TRUTH Is this a young Bill? And will Tarantino revisit O-Ren's origin (below) in a feature-length prequel?

RUMOR: Quentin Tarantino is planning to make a prequel to *Kill Bill* done completely as an anime feature!

FACT: The anime sequence in *Volume 1* was the only time we saw the origin of one of the characters, and Tarantino has hinted at press events that he'd be interested in showing more of the backstory, all in anime. "It is something certainly that he has kind of in a fun way talked about," Lawrence Bender said with surprise, unaware that this dream project is known by the public, "but it is not something that has been a big plan. It's just something that Quentin thought would be a fun thing to do, but it is not anything that is in progress on or anything. It's just one of those fun ideas that could happen—or never happen."

RUMOR: The tone and style of the anime in *Kill Bill: Volume 1* was inspired by the work in Studio Madhouse's *Ninja Scroll*.

FACT: Lots of blood and a helping of swordplay reminded anime fans of the classic 1993 movie and series. But was there a direct inspiration? Not at all, according to Kazuto Nakazawa. "It's a surprise as I have never heard that before!" he exclaimed. "I doubt that anybody in Japan thought that. I didn't even think about that show when I had worked on *Kill Bill*. But I feel honored to be thought that way," he said, setting the record straight.

RUMOR: The man in the white suit that killed O-Ren's father in the flashback anime sequence in *Volume 1* is a young Bill.

FACT: Maybe so, maybe not. Conspiracy buffs noticed that both characters wear rings and are ominous with a sword, and heck, the dating of the flashback story would make the man in the white suit just the right age. But Bender kept that answer locked in the vault. "You know, that's one of those wonderful things that I think people should continue to guess at and think about. I can't say either way." Dang. ■ JP

SPEEDLINES

ITTY BITTY BITS OF ANIME NEWS JUST FOR YOU!



SHELL GAMES

Production I.G. announced that 26 new episodes of *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* will premiere in January 2004. The new season, entitled *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex Second Gig*, will continue the adventures of Major Motoko Kusanagi and the rest of Section 9, a special police agency who deal with crimes involving artificial intelligences.

LUM LEARNS ENGLISH

AnimEigo will dub all of the long-awaited Urusei Yatsura movies, since the dub of the first UY movie, *Only You*, was well received. The new UY movie and OVA DVD box set will now be postponed to late 2004 or beyond.



ALL DRESSED UP

Eggheads at the Institute for Soldier Nanotechnologies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology claim they can make a "super-suit" that will allow soldiers of the future access to enhanced strength, jump dozens of feet in the air, harden to protect against incoming bullets and even change colors to match its surroundings...making it the ultimate cosplay outfit. Don't start shopping until 2018, the proposed date of completion.

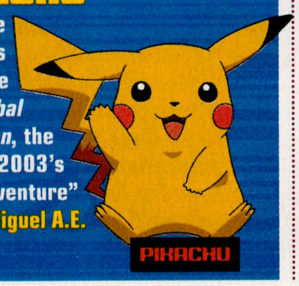


READ A GOOD MECHA

Original creator Yoshiyuki Tomino's three Gundam novels, *Awakening*, *Escalation* and *Confrontation*, are about to be recollected and released in a single volume collection from Stone Bridge Press. Originally published in 1979 by Asahi Sonorama, the series takes a deeper, more mature look at the conflict between Amuro Ray and Char Aznable. The book is due in April for $14.95.

THE EDUCATED PIKACHU

A volume of academic articles about the Pokémon franchise and phenomenon is about to be published in February by Duke University Press. Entitled *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon*, the various essays were collected from 2003's "Nintentionality, or Pikachu's Global Adventure" academic conference. ■ Zac Bertschy, Miguel A.E. Betita, Caitlin Moriarity & Tom Root



IN THE ARMY NOW

Is Japan's Military the Latest Anime Player?

North Korea may have just gotten the bomb, but the Japanese military knows that anime *is* da bomb.

At a time when most governments in Southeast Asia are closely watching their communist neighbor's sudden admission into the nuclear club, our favorite Asian country hasn't forgotten its priorities. The Japan Self-Defense Force has announced that it's co-producing a six-episode OVA anime named *Sora*.



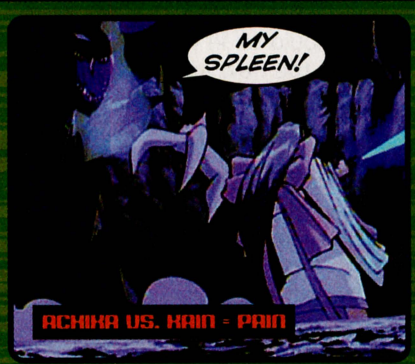
Due out in 2004, Studio Nekoya's *Sora* (which means "blue sky" in Japanese) tells the story of a group of private pilots who, after the closings of American military bases in Japan, now work for the Japanese government. As the film's tag line hints, "Those who were entranced by the blue skies, have returned here."

Though not the first time the Japanese military has co-produced anime (they had a hand in *801 T.T.S. Airbats*, currently distributed in the States by ADV), it is the first time we'll see their input rendered in CGI. Just like *Yukikaze* and *Macross Zero* before it, *Sora* will mix traditional animation with aerial scenes rendered on the computer.

As of press-time, there are yet no licensing agreements to distribute the OVA in America. ■ Doug Goldstein

DEATH OF THE MONTH

KAIN FROM 'TENCHI MUYO! THE MOVIE'



When Kain, an intergalactic criminal that was only captured with the help from the Jurai Royal Family, finally busts out of his special holding chamber, he's out for revenge—specifically, against Achika, the unwitting princess of Jurai and Tenchi's mother. Confronting the two of them, Kain gets more than he bargained for when Achika uses her innate Jurai power to make a 30-foot-long energy sword, which she uses to hack the scoundrel to several dozen pieces. Mad scientist Washu and space policewoman Kiyone finish the job by firing a Dimensional Cannon at Kain's reforming pieces—it's enough power to destroy a small galaxy, and Kain gets it right in the kidney. Now that smarts! ■ MB

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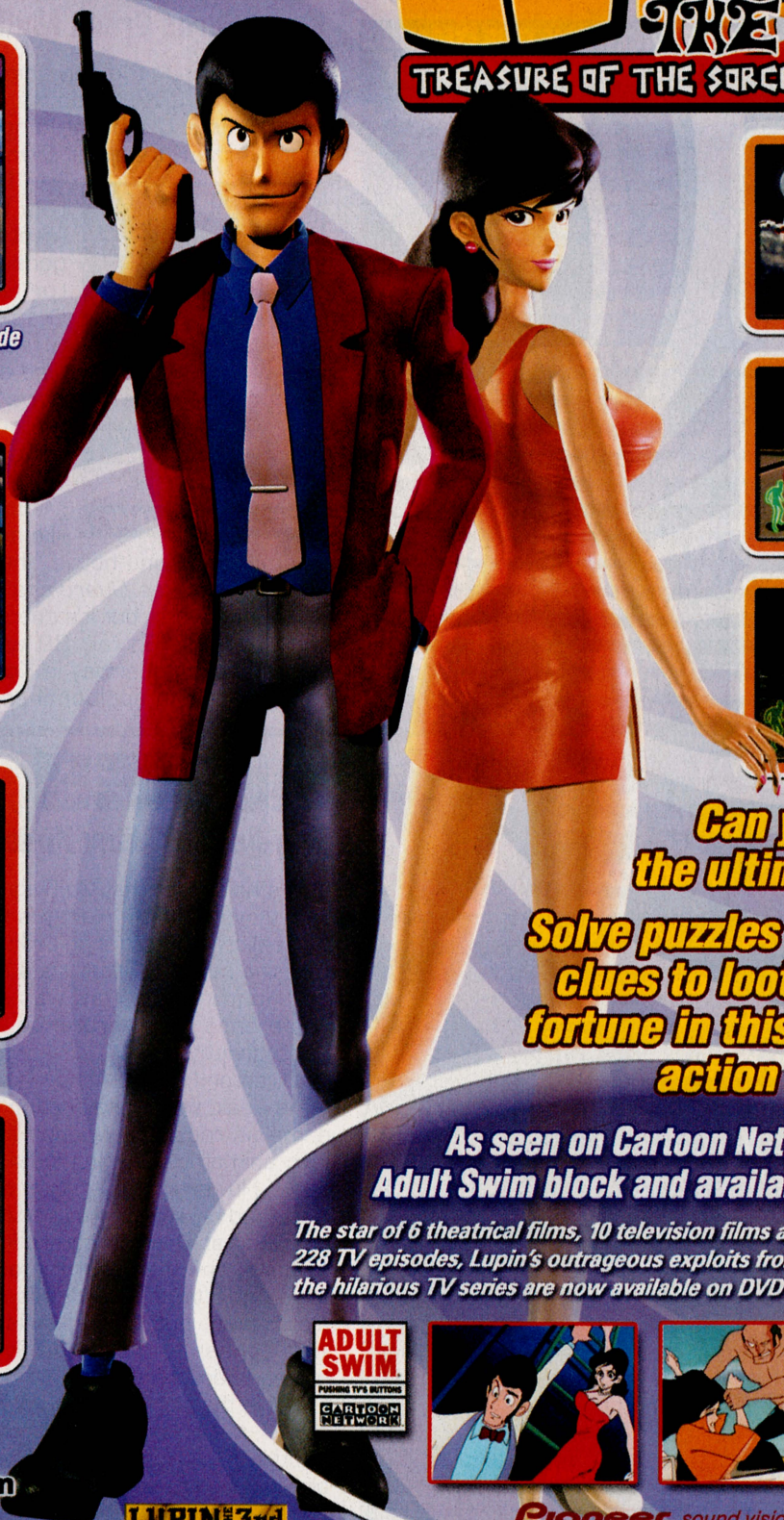




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THE TV GUIDE

THE COMPLETE SCHEDULE FOR ALL THE ANIME YOUR EYEBALLS CAN HANDLE. BE CAREFUL—TIMES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE!



ABC FAMILY

***Beyblade*:** Weekdays 7:30 a.m.; Sat. 7:30 & 9 a.m.
***Daigunder*:** Weekdays 8:30 a.m., Sat. 9:30 a.m.
***Digimon*:** Weekdays 7 a.m., Sat. 7 & 10 a.m.
***Medabots*:** Sat. 10:30 a.m.

CARTOON NETWORK

Cartoon Network constantly updates its schedule, so check www.cartoonnetwork.com for the most current listings.
Toonami: *SD Gundam Force* at 5 p.m. Mon.-Fri., *Dragon Ball* at 6:30 p.m. Mon.-Thurs., *Dragon Ball GT* at 6:30 p.m Fridays.
Adult Swim Weeknights: *Inuyasha* at midnight & 3 a.m., *The Big O* at 12:30 & 3:30 a.m., *Trigun* at 1 & 4 a.m., *Kikaider* at 1:30 & 4:30 a.m.
Adult Swim Sunday: *Trigun* at 1 & 4 a.m., *Kikaider* at 1:30 & 4:30 a.m.
Saturday: *Knights of the Zodiac* at 7 p.m., *Yu-Gi-Oh!* at 7:30 p.m., *Zoids* at 8 p.m., *Rurouni Kenshin* at 11 p.m., *Dragon Ball Z* at 11:30 p.m., *.hack//SIGN* at midnight, *Yu Yu Hakusho* at 12:30 a.m.



***Hamtaro*:** Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m., Sun. 3 p.m.
***Pokémon*:** Mon.-Thurs. 7 a.m. & 9 p.m., Fri 7 a.m.
***Yu-Gi-Oh!*:** Mon.-Thurs. 10 p.m.
***Zoids*:** Mon.-Fri. at 6 a.m.

FOX BOX

***Kirby: Right Back At Ya!*:** Sat. 9 a.m.
***Sonic X*:** Sat. 9:30 a.m. & 11:30 a.m.
***Shaman King*:** Sat. 10 a.m.
***Ultimate Muscle*:** Sat. 8:30 a.m.

INTERNATIONAL CHANNEL

***Dragon Ball GT*:** Sun. 10:30 p.m.
***Fushigi Yugi*:** Tues. 11 p.m.
***Lost Universe*:** Mon. 11 p.m.

KIDS WB!

***Megaman NT Warrior*:** Sat. 9:30 a.m.
***Pokémon*:** Weekdays 4 p.m.; Sat. 10 a.m.
***Yu-Gi-Oh!*:** Weekdays 4:30 p.m., Sat. 8:30 & 11 a.m.

SHOWTIME NEXT

Catch the crazy popular *Great Teacher Onizuka* five nights a week!
***GTO*:** Mon.-Fri. 9 p.m.

TECHTV

Anime Unleashed airs 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, weeknights 1 to 1:30 a.m., and Friday 11 p.m. to 1 a.m., cycling through complete runs of several series. Check out *Silent Mobius*, *Dual*, *Betterman*, *Geneshaft*, *Crest of the Stars*, its sequel *Banner of the Stars* and *Serial Experiments Lain*. ■ CM

ZEUSES WILD!

Korea Turns Greek Myths Into Anime. Zounds!

Japan isn't the only animation hotbed in Asia—you've gotta give Korea its props. Which is just what Anime Crash is doing in 2004 as the company imports the Korean hit *Olympus Guardians*.



"The best way I can describe this to you is *Oh My Goddess!* meets *Ranma* meets the Olympian gods," revealed managing director Scott Mauriello. Based on Greek mythology and the adventures contained in Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, *Guardians* stays faithful enough to its source material to be considered educational, but its "anime-esque" tone won't let down hardcore otaku, Mauriello said. Plus, "the girls look like hot anime girls and even Zeus is a muscle-bound hottie," he hinted—never a bad thing.

Mauriello likes *Guardians'* chance of getting picked up by a TV network, but it's currently destined for DVD at the end of 2004. So far, 39 episodes exist, though more *Guardians* is underway in Korea in the form of a theatrical release and additional episodic series. ■ TR

HONEY FLASH!

Live-Action 'Cutey Honey' Reinvents Animation

It's no secret that Go Nagai's slightly naughty and highly enjoyable *Cutie Honey* is being made into a live-action feature film starring Eriko Sato. What is a surprise is that the movie will feature a new type of animation known as "Honeymation," as was revealed at a recent press conference to celebrate the wrap of the movie's principal photography.

Director Hideaki Anno—he of *Neon Genesis Evangelion* fame—said that Honeymation is essentially the same as regular animation in that it begins with animators drawing individual frames by hand. However, rather than shoot the cels, Anno had his live actors pose in the same positions as the characters in the illustrations, and then shot the actors one frame at a time. The idea is similar to claymation, but the result is humans who appear to move and fly like animated characters.

While the technique may sound quite radical, it shouldn't be considering the mind-bending product that we're already used to seeing from Anno. Fans can catch a sneak peek of the Honeymation in the flick's trailer at www.cutiehoney.com.
■ Kumar Sivasubramanian

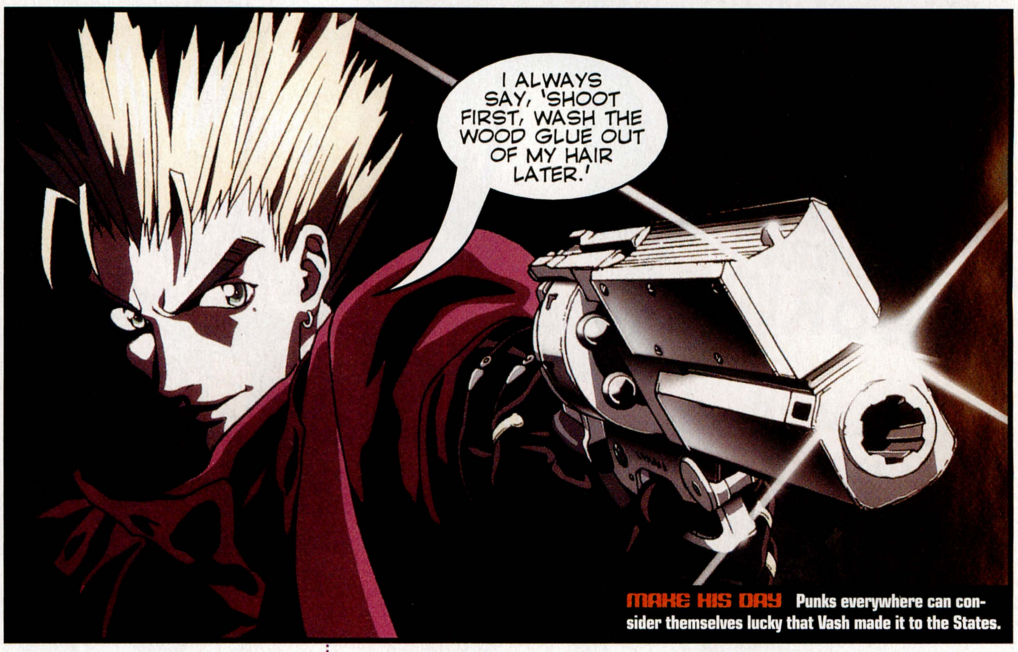



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'TRIGUN' CONTROL

Visiting the Madhouse that Sent Vash Stampeding into America

It's probably no coincidence that Vash the Stampede—star of *Trigun* and most wanted man on the planet Gunsmoke—is one of anime's most wanted properties. Geneon's *Trigun* DVDs have been flying off store shelves since 2000, and its ratings on Cartoon Network have been high enough to keep it in heavy rotation since its March 2003 premiere. *Anime Insider* spoke with *Trigun* producer Masao Maruyama, and director Satoshi Nishimura of the Madhouse studios about anime's most peace-loving gunslinger and his enduring popularity.



MAKE HIS DAY Punks everywhere can consider themselves lucky that Vash made it to the States.

Was it hard directing *Trigun*, since the manga hadn't finished?

Nishimura: I think it's always a difficult proposition to end an anime when the original manga isn't finished yet. My own personal feeling for the ending has been properly executed if you saw some personal growth in Vash.

Did manga creator Yasuhiro Nightow get mad when you killed a main character?

Nishimura: I did have permission from Nightow-san to kill Wolfwood *(Laughs)*. We did come up with the idea that Wolfwood should probably die given how the story was progressing. When we suggested it to Mr. Nightow he said, "Okay, that works." Generally, on any Madhouse production with decisions that effect the original work greatly like that we consult the original creator first and get permission before proceeding.


NICHOLAS D. WOLFWOOD

The popularity of the *Ninja Scroll* movie warranted a TV series. Could *Trigun* get a movie?

Maruyama: I'd like all of Madhouse's work to be like that someday—I'd like to see our TV series in the theater sometime and if an anime was shown only in theaters, I'd like to make a TV series for it, but right now we have our hands full with what we've got.

Given *Trigun*'s huge success in America, do you now make anime with America in mind?

Nishimura: When I make an anime, I make it so I can enjoy it. If the people in America can enjoy it because of the same reason I do, I am very happy.

Maruyama: This is a very difficult question because by eliminating Japanese cultural references it may make it more acceptable in the U.S. and worldwide, but there are some cases in which having Japanese cultural references that a foreigner would find strange can actually make that anime more acceptable. So, as a ground rule, we try not to consider the fact that it's going to be exported or make any script or directing changes.

But are you ever bothered that *Trigun* gets edited for American TV?

Maruyama: I am sometimes a little upset that they change things, but I am at the same time happy that it's getting released in the U.S. Even when making anime in Japan, the way we work on it is suddenly different depending on the format. I think it's unavoidable that there are going to be minor changes to anime when it's exported to other countries that have different censoring rules. But there are some changes that take it too far.

What does the future of the Japanese animation industry hold?

Maruyama: Because of the outflow of anime into the U.S., the amount of anime being produced in Japan has

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT Vash's crew (from l to r: Milly, Meryl and Wolfwood) are wanted—by Japanese and U.S. fans

increased dramatically. To be quite frank, we are producing more anime than we should be right now. We are over capacity. This has led to a decline in the quality of anime.

Nishimura: I feel the same way as Maruyama-san. The amount of anime that I have to work on has reached a point where I can't really be responsible for the quality for all the anime that I'm working on. If we could reduce the quantity of anime, then I would be very happy.

Any future plans you can divulge?

Maruyama: For myself, I have five projects in the pipeline, but I hope to give information piece meal. Last year I inadvertently admitted I was working in *The Animatrix*, and the Wachowski brothers were very angry with me.

Nishimura: I have two original ideas I would like to animate. One would involve a scientist and be a *The Right Stuff*-type story. I also have one that would be just like a high school-type story.

Since Hayao Miyazaki has won an Academy Award for *Spirited Away*, do you feel that raises the bar for the Japanese animation industry?

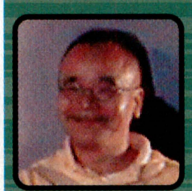
Maruyama: I hope so. *(Laughs)* You know, Miyazaki-san didn't suddenly become much better at making anime. The reason he won the Academy Award is because he kept doing the same thing he always did, but now is being recognized. So we'll continue doing things the same way we have always been doing it.

The one thing to note is that for *Spirited Away* Miyazaki-san had a far larger budget than he did for any of his previous work. If you give us lots of money, we'll do well too. ■ Steve Baptista

VITAL STATS

INMATES IN THE MADHOUSE

MASAO MARUYAMA



Producer, *Trigun*

BIRTHDATE: 1941, in Miyagi Prefecture, Japan

FIRST ANIME JOB: Started as an animator for Osamu Tezuka's Mushi Productions

CREDITS: One of the original founders of Madhouse Studios, Maruyama has produced an amazing pantheon of titles, including *Barefoot Gen*, *Record of Lodoss War*, *Urusei Yatsura*, *Ninja Scroll*, *Vampire Hunter D*, *Metropolis*, *Chobits* and many more!

COMING SOON: The *Ninja Scroll* TV series (Urban Vision); *Magical Shopping Arcade Abenobashi*, with Studio Gainax (ADV); the theatrical release of *Tokyo Godfathers* (Columbia).

SATOSHI NISHIMURA



Director, *Trigun*

BIRTHDATE: June 15, 1964, in Osaka

FAVORITE FILM: *Once Upon a Time in the West*

FIRST ANIME JOB: Storyboard artist for the Japan-only *Spirit Hero Wataru 2*.

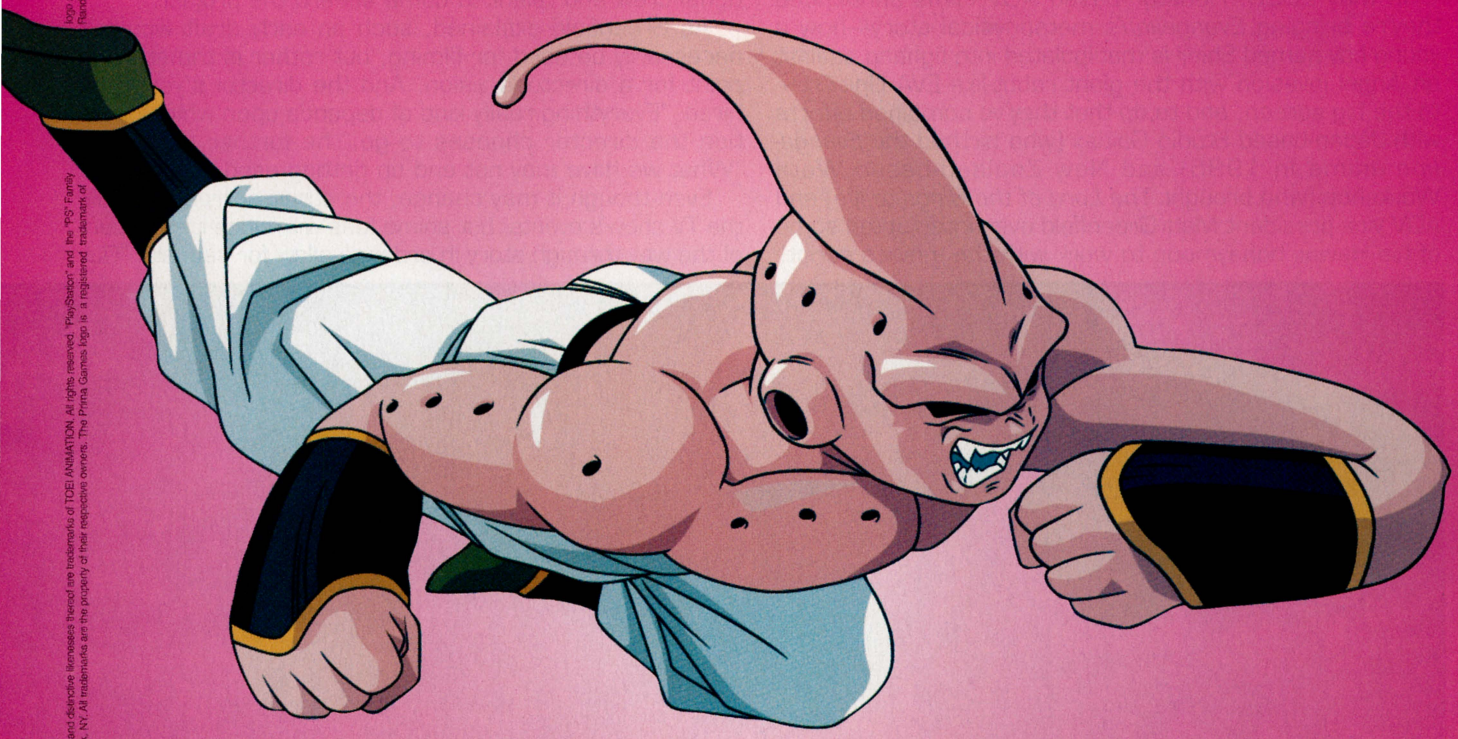
CREDITS: Animator for *Guyver: Out of Control* and the *Street Fighter Alpha* movie, he also handled all the storyboards for *Trigun* besides directing it.

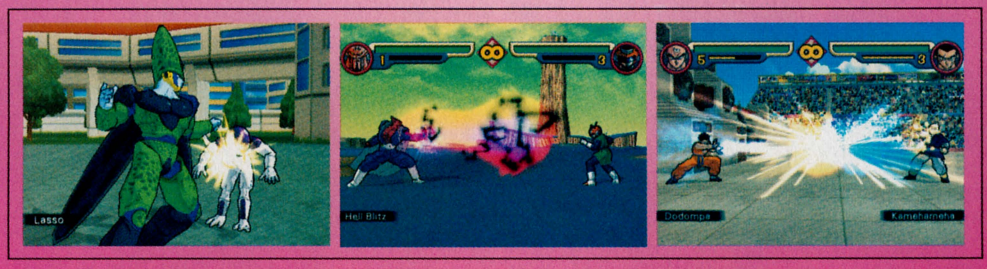
COMING SOON: The long-running boxing epic *Hajime no Ippo* from Geneon Entertainment. ■ MB

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THE REEL DEAL

A Sneak Peek at the Live-Action 'Evangelion' Movie Production

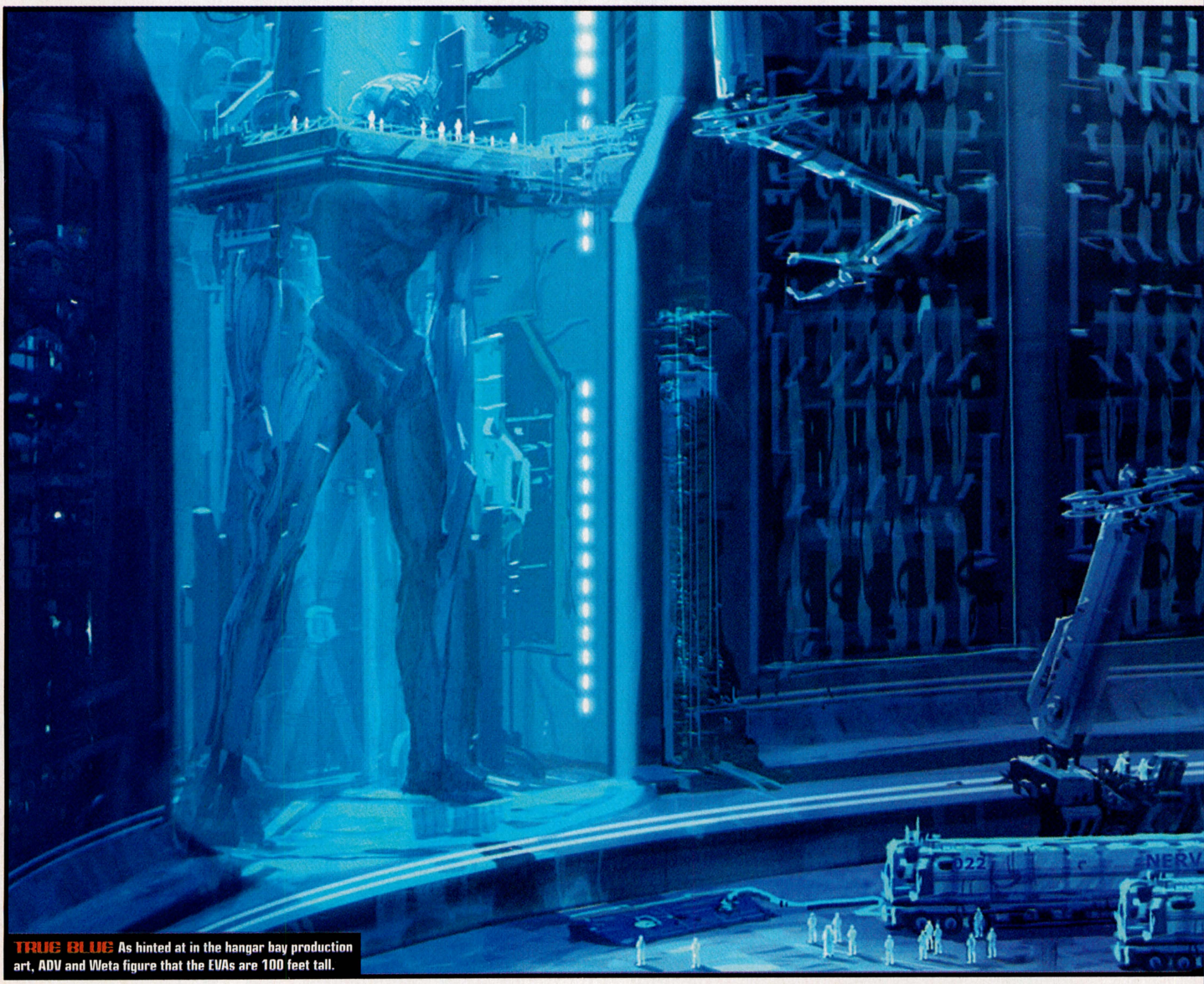
It'll take the combined efforts of entertainment companies around the world to bring about the apocalypse, but it's also gotten in the way of one man's honeymoon.

In May 2003, Houston-based ADV Films announced they're bringing *Evangelion*'s metaphysical story—how a young boy named Shinji is manipulated into fighting against an Angel invasion with the giant robot-like EVA Unit-01—to the big screen, and to do that they've combined efforts with Japan-based Studio Gainax (who birthed the *Evangelion* anime in 1995) and New Zealand-based Weta Workshop (who brought *The Lord of the Rings* to life) and ADV vice-president Matt Greenfield even interrupted some of his Hawaii honeymoon to work with the movie's script!

"We have a draft that we feel condenses the best elements of *Evangelion*," revealed a tanned Greenfield. "That's what we're using right now as a basis for looking for additional crew and talent to come aboard the project."

As Greenfield explained, such an early draft wouldn't necessarily be used for filming, but rather is the starting point for a director's vision. And the director's yet to be hired. "Everything really kind of depends upon which direction the director chooses to go," he further explained. "What we have may not end up getting used at all."

Even though it may change, the script currently retells the TV show's events, but anime fans will notice it ends part of the way through story in order to allow for sequels. "Our



TRUE BLUE As hinted at in the hangar bay production art, ADV and Weta figure that the EVAs are 100 feet tall.

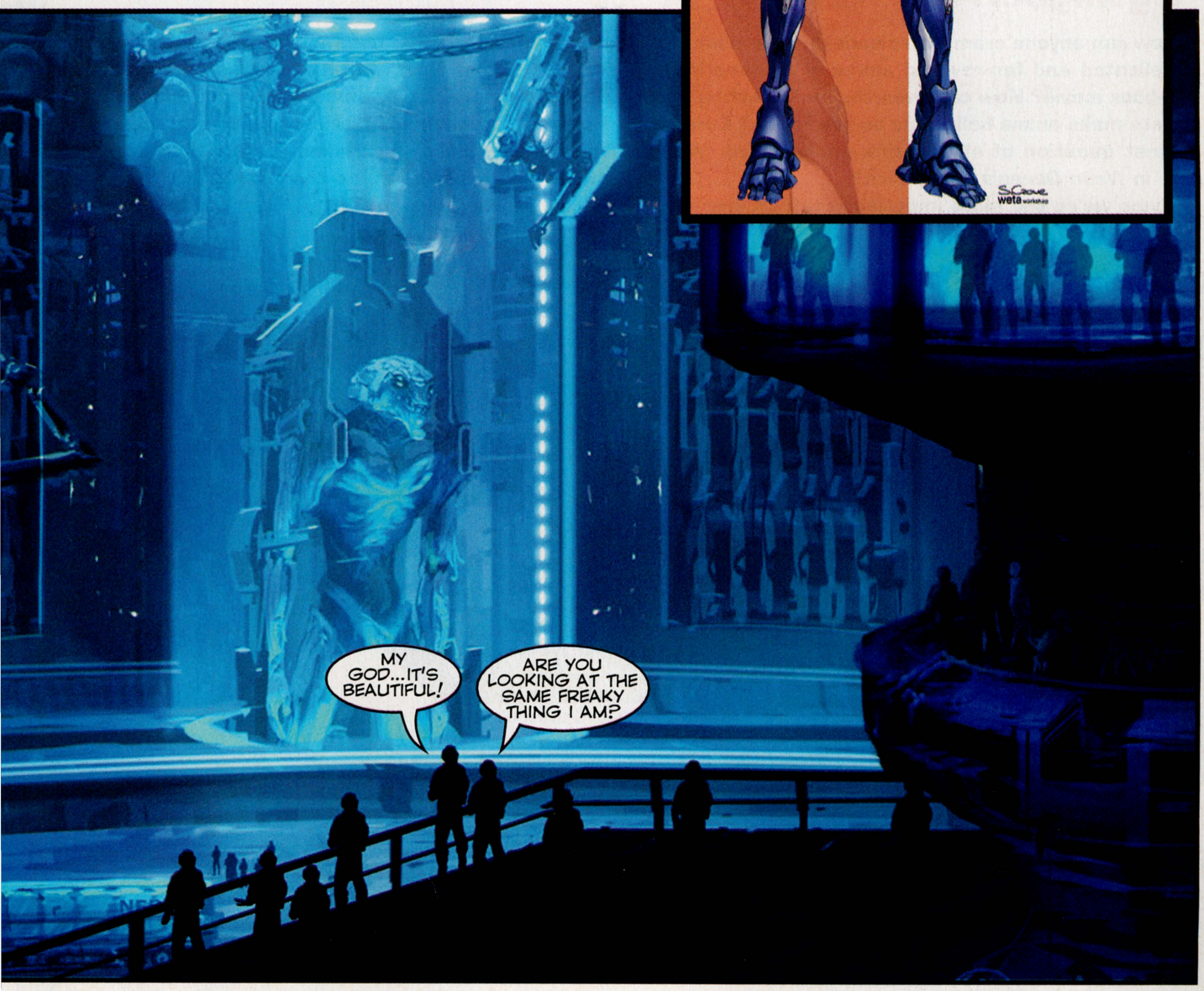
basic concern was that the first movie would be self-contained. If you just watched and you knew nothing about *Eva* up front, that you would come out saying, 'Wow, that was a great movie.' And then, 'Oh, there's more.'" If done right, Greenfield and the ADV crew hope this will whet the public's appetite for more without leaving them unfulfilled. "*Matrix Reloaded* ended mid-story and then you were like, 'I've got to come back in six months to find out what the heck happens next.' We didn't want to do that."

Based on the script and their own love of the anime, a team of 12 artists from Weta Workshop have churned out production sketches—some of which you're seeing here for the first time—that will define the look and feel of the movie, and Greenfield's got his favorite. "The production illustration that I love the best is this wonderful scene of the EVA hanger bay. We figure the EVAs are over 100 feet tall just standing there. I just can't wait to see something like that," he smiled.

And when will we see the fruits of all this labor? Greenfield hints that we may have to wait as long as 2010 to buy our popcorn. "Right now we're where the people doing *The Lord Of The Rings* were seven years ago. It may happen very quickly or it may take a while. It's even conceivable that it might not happen at all. But everyone who's involved with the project is just totally dedicated to it. The amount of work they have all put in is amazing." ■ Trisha L. Sebastian



STANDING TALL Weta artist Stephen Crowe's depiction of EVA Unit-00 and Rei Ayanamiare shows how everything is being redesigned



CASTING CALL

We're Just Not Willing to Wait! 'Anime Insider' Casts the 'Neon Genesis Evangelion' Movie

By Miguel A.E. Betita

How can anyone cram 26 episodes of the most complicated and fan-revered anime of all time into a two-hour movie? How can even the most cutting edge effects make anime believable as live-action? Even the biggest question of all remains unanswered: Who'll star in *Neon Genesis Evangelion?*

Since we're the most impatient staff to ever work on a magazine, we've gone ahead and cast the movie for ADV Films. Now, an all-Japanese cast would be ideal but impractical, since a massive blockbuster requires established American super-star names to bring in the bucks—just admit it. But Hollywood can check out our picks, and to the guys at ADV—you can pay our casting fees in DVDs.



Daniel Radcliffe as SHINJI IKARI

Aside from the fact he's Shinji's age, everyone's favorite wizard-in-training can easily transform into everyone's favorite First Child. Daniel's experience being browbeaten and subsumed by the Dursleys gives him the perfect experience to be ordered about by NERV.





Hillary Duff as ASUKA SORYU LANGLEY

Asuka's attitude is large and in charge, making it a perfect role for actress-turned-singer Hillary Duff. After playing kid-friendly roles like Lizzie McGuire on TV and in the movies, Hillary's energetic enough for the part.







Shawn Ashmore as TOUJI SUZUHARA

Shawn's come a long way from his *Animorph* days, but his uncanny resemblance to Shinji's classmate and Fourth Child Touji, as well as his ability to play younger roles like he did as Iceman in *X-Men*, makes him an obvious choice. Somebody get him some dark hair dye, and we're golden.

Chiaki Kuriyama as REI AYANAMI

We know few actresses better-suited to play the emotionally-deprived First Child than Chiaki, who played emotionally-deprived Go-Go Yubari in Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill*. Her unsettling silences, along with a stare cold enough to freeze most Angels in their tracks, easily makes Kiriyama our top pick.





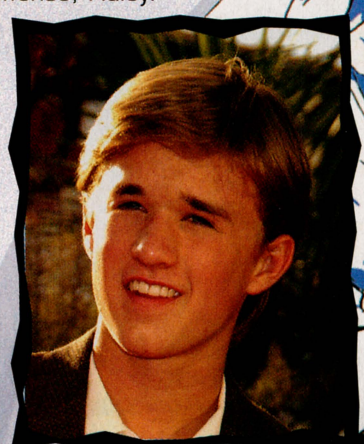


Natalie Imbruglia as MISATO KATSURAGI

Though Misato's not exactly known for her singing ability, Natalie *does* have NERV's First Tactical Officer's smoldering beauty and her wild streak, making her our favorite party girl. Plus, she's got the talent to pull off her more somber, serious side; Natalie got her acting break on an Australian soap opera!

Haley Joel Osment as KAWORU NAGISA

When Haley Joel's name was mentioned as a contender for Shinji Ikari, online fans protested and moaned—but since Kaworu's the same as Rei, who's the clone of Shinji's mom, we saw the irony in casting him as the 17th Angel and Fifth Child. Plus, Haley Joel's soft features and androgynous mannerisms make him a perfect fit. No offense, Haley!





Colin Farrell as RYOJI KAJI

Hollywood's full of pretty boys and bad boys, but only Colin Farrell is the ultimate pretty bad boy. The former Dubliner stage actor and A-list celeb sports a perpetual 5 o'clock shadow, and is popular with the opposite sex, making him perfectly in tune with Kaji's role as double agent and ladies' man.

Gwyneth Paltrow as RITSUKO AKAGI

Intelligent as she is beautiful, Gwyneth Paltrow is versatile enough to play cool and calculating Science Officer Ritsuko Akagi. Though the personalities don't exactly match, Gwyneth not only has the hair and waifish figure of her animated counterpart, but can pull off the cool intellectual role—just catch her as poet Sylvia Plath in her new movie *Sylvia*.



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Hugo Weaving as GENDO IKARI

Whether it's as Agent Smith or elvish Lord Elrond, Hugo's presence alone commands the people around him; someone playing Gendo will need it to rule NERV *and* save Earth from the Angels. However, get the man some glasses and white gloves, and his strong, tenor voice and unnerving stare will make sure that everyone knows who the boss is.



Ian McKellan as KOUZOU FUYUTSUKI

Hands-down our favorite choice for this role, Ian's veteran status on the stage and screen brings a genteel and dignified quality to NERV's Sub-Commander Fuyutsuki. Educated and reserved, he was Fuyutsuki even before he auditioned! Plus, it never hurts to have Gandalf and Magneto on your side.

Intern extraordinaire Miguel A.E. Betita was named after his parents' favorite film, Titan A.E.

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FACT AND FICTION Former manslayer Kenshin stands among characters fake (like Sanosuke, upper right) and real (like Saito Hajime, lower-left).

SAMURAI

By Bamboo Dong

The Bloody True Story of How Centuries of War and Revolt Killed the Shogun, Restored an Empire, and Put *Rurouni Kenshin* on Cartoon Network

Ever wish you could watch anime instead of going to history class? Well, if you've ever watched an episode of *Rurouni Kenshin*, you've done both. For a series that packs in so much action, drama and humor, it still manages to be a better lesson on historical Japan than you'd get in any classroom.

Manga creator Nobuhiro Watsuki set *Kenshin* in 1879, 10 years after the start of the Meiji Restoration. There, Kamiya Kaoru, a feisty female dojo owner, meets a wandering samurai named Kenshin Himura, who was the most feared manslayer during the revolution, but has now renounced killing.

This plot synopsis doesn't begin to encompass the countless real-life references that Watsuki used in creating *Rurouni Kenshin.* Although Watsuki chose this time period because he wanted to tell a samurai story without confusing readers with the numerous battles that took place in earlier time periods, *Kenshin* is loaded with history. Heck, it's hard enough keeping the *Kenshin* anime straight—the 95-episode TV series which aired on Cartoon Network is available from Media Blasters, but ADV Films released the six OVAs and movie under the title *Samurai X*.

Is your head swimming? Just take a deep breath and just start reading. We're laying out the fact and fiction of *Rurouni Kenshin* right here. And it's the most entertaining history lesson you've ever read.



IEYASU TOKUGAWA

THE MEIJI RESTORATION In order to understand the Meiji Restoration, you need to know about the Tokugawa Era it replaced. In the early 1600s, a man named Ieyasu Tokugawa waged a bloody war to control Japan. He declared himself *shogun*, and effectively turned the emperor into a puppet of his regime.

But in the 1850s, uprisings against the Tokugawa government ripped through Japan, as angry imperialists wanted to toss out the shogun and put the emperor back in power. After years of civil war, they toppled the Tokugawa government and restored the Emperor Meiji to power in 1868. This began the Meiji Restoration, called that because it supposedly restored Japan to peace, and to how things were supposed to be.

But as any *Rurouni Kenshin* fan knows, the peace of the Meiji era is pretty fragile—Kenshin has no shortage of enemies, nor does the new Meiji government.

The Wicked Witch of the West

In Rurouni: Kenshin always manages to kick butt when it comes to sword fighting, but things get icky when he has to fight against guns and other firearms. Part of the problem is that for the most part, guns—and eyeglasses and suits and steam ships—are new to Japan. During the Tokugawa era, Japan was closed to Western trade almost entirely, shutting itself off from all but the Orient. By the time of *Rurouni Kenshin*, guns were still rare but a definite problem, and for more folks than just Kenshin.

In Reality: In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry and his American fleet landed in Edo Bay, startling the Japanese, who had never seen steam ships before. Awed and perhaps afraid of America's technological superiority, the shogunate agreed to open two of Japan's ports for trading in 1854.



COMMODORE PERRY

This angered many people who felt like foreigners were invading their country. Chanting "Revere the emperor, expel the barbarians," groups of radicals thought that all of their problems would be solved if they overthrew the government and put the emperor back in charge. Naturally, the shogunate fought back. But in order to gain the advantage, both groups started importing Western technology in the 1860s to duke it out for control of the government. Oddly enough, once the radicals won, they invited Western experts back to help build railroads, military equipment and industry, which is why *Kenshin* is so full of American and European culture.



TECH PROBLEMS Western influence was seen as corrupting by many Japanese—if you'd wear a suit you'd probably fire a huge Gatling gun too.

Ronin Warriors

In Rurouni: Kenshin is always catching flak for carrying around a sword, especially since it was against the law. This makes him stick out on the streets (as if his bright red hair isn't enough), attracting all sorts of unruly folks looking for a fight, and the police too. As a samurai, shouldn't Kenshin have a sword?

In Reality: In 1600, the Tokugawa shogunate changed the role of the samurai from warriors to government



DOUBLE-EDGE SWORD Kenshin may have used his sword for peace, but he wasn't supposed to!

DATES OF INFAMY

THE FALL AND RISE OF IMPERIAL JAPAN: A TIMELINE FROM THE TOKUGAWA GOVERNMENT TO THE MEIJI RESTORATION

1600 Power-hungry Ieyasu Tokugawa defeats the Imperial forces at the Battle of Sekigahara, giving rise to the Tokugawa shogunate. Emperors live on as figureheads.

1853 U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry arrives with his fleet, exposing Japan to the wonders of Western technology.

1854 Japanese ports are opened to the U.S. for trading. Many Japanese feel threatened by the alien culture and blame the shogunate.

1863 An imperial order is issued to get rid of the foreigners, but the shogunate ignores it.

1863 The Choshu daimyo alone tries to expel the foreigners, which angers the shogunate.

1864 Radicals from Choshu set Kyoto on fire as part of a struggle with the government. (In *Ruroni Kenshin*, this is where Kenshin joins the Choshu group as an assassin.)

1866 Yoshinobu Tokugawa becomes the 15th and final shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate.

1866 Anti-shogunate revolutionaries from Choshu and Satsuma join forces, making a truly formidable power.

1868 Satsuma radicals rush into Kyoto and seize the imperial palace. Restoration of the imperial order is proclaimed under Emperor Meiji, beginning the Meiji Restoration.

1869 The shogunate army is defeated and Imperial rule is cemented. ■ BD

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(s03)

workers, taking the power from samurai to fight the new government. The ex-warriors were taken from their masters and forced to do boring things like shuffling paper for the government. The samurai were still allowed to keep their swords, though, and still trained in the art of fighting. At the beginning of the Meiji Restoration, however, carrying swords was banned entirely to prevent any more uprisings. Even a samurai who helped bring the emperor back to power wasn't exempt, which is why Kenshin's sword caused so much trouble when seen—and why so many samurai are so bitter about the new government in *RK*.





SAMURAI SPIRITS **Don't make an ex-assassin like Kenshin (above) mad; while the elite Shinsengumi (left) were real, *RK*'s Isshin Shishi (right) weren't.**

THE PEOPLE

Man Slayer

In Rurouni: One of the most feared and notorious swordsmen of the Meiji Restoration, Kenshin was a hitokiri (hired assassin) for the group dedicated to toppling the Tokugawa shogunate. Because he was so deadly, he was given the name "Battousai," which means "master of the quick draw." He used his skill and superior swordsmanship to help fight the Shinsengumi, the shogun's elite samurai squad!

In Reality: Both the shogunate and the anti-shogunate forces had talented hired assassins to help their cause, so it's no lie that hitokiri did exist. Of the four main hitokiri, Gensai Kawakami was said to be the most powerful—it's he on whom Kenshin was based, according to manga-ka Watsuki. Kawakami was supposed to have looked a bit like a girl, but was the most ruthless of all hitokiri.

Samurai Showdown

In Rurouni: Kenshin was a hitokiri for the Isshin Shishi, who wish to restore the emperor to power. In the *Rurouni Kenshin* movie, a man named Ryoma Sakamoto is seen in flashback, leading these anti-shogunate forces.

In Reality: Watsuki fudged a little—while they never called themselves the Isshin Shishi, there certainly was a group opposed to the shogunate. This group first started out when the real Ryoma Sakamoto untied the two strongest anti-shogunate groups from the Choshu and Satsuma prefectures. After both groups finally signed an alliance in 1866, they massed enough to power to topple the Tokugawa government. Sakamoto was assassinated in 1867, but the group continued to fight under their three leaders: Satsuma prefecture's Toshimichi Okubo and Saigo Takamori, and Choshu prefecture's Kogoro Katsura, for whom Kenshin was a bodyguard in the *RK* OVAs.

Opposing Forces

In Rurouni: The Shinsengumi make Kenshin's life hell during the OVAs, as they fought on the side of the shogunate against Kenshin. Kenshin inflicted heavy losses upon them as a hitokiri during the civil wars, but with one notable exception (see next page) were not seen in the Rurouni Kenshin series outside of the OVAs.

In Reality: The Shinsengumi were formed by the Tokugawa shogunate from a group of 20 ronin, to defend government officials. They disbanded after they lost the civil war, but you can bet those who survived—and many other samurai displaced by the new Meiji government—were not happy with their new situation.

BAD TO THE BLADE

SLICE AND DICE, PEOPLE! IT'S HISTORY'S MOST BAD-ASS SAMURAI



Kenshin Himura may never have existed in real life, but there were certainly some real—and legendary—samurai just as awesome. Here's the lowdown on the greatest samurai history has to offer and their Bad-ass rating, on a scale of 1 to 5.

Musashi Miyamoto (1584-1645)—The author of the ultimate guide for samurai, *The Book of Five Rings*, he was able to win most of his duels with just a wooden sword. Stories say that he managed to kill Sasaki Kojiro (below) with just a boat oar. Bad-ass rating: 5

Yagyu Jubei (late 1500s-1650)—Perfecting the Yagyu Shinkage sword technique, he helped bring Tokugawa to power in the Battle of Sekigahara. He was such a good swordsman that he taught the shoguns himself. Bad-ass rating: 4

Sasaki Kojiro (late 1500s-1612)—Developing his sword technique by cutting down flying sparrows from the air, he was known as the best swordsman in southern Japan. He was killed in a legendary duel with Musashi Miyamoto. Bad-ass rating: 5

Oishi Kuranosuke (unknown)—The leader of the 47 Ronin, he and the others spent an entire year planning revenge after their master was tricked into attacking an official and forced to commit suicide. They killed the official, knowing they each would have to commit suicide too. Bad-ass rating: 5 ■ BD

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Police Force

In Rurouni: At the beginning of the second season of the TV series, a policeman named Saito Hajime first shows up at Kaoru's dojo as a policeman looking for the legendary Kenshin. When Saito challenges Kenshin to a duel, the two are revealed as old rivals, struggling to settle a grudge that began 10 years ago.

In Reality: Saito Hajime did exist, and was the captain of the third squad of the Shinsengumi. As one of the leaders of the Shinsengumi, Saito's natural enemy would have been the anti-shogunate forces, and doubtless would have fought Kenshin, had he actually existed. After the war, he joined the police and changed his name to Fujita Goro.



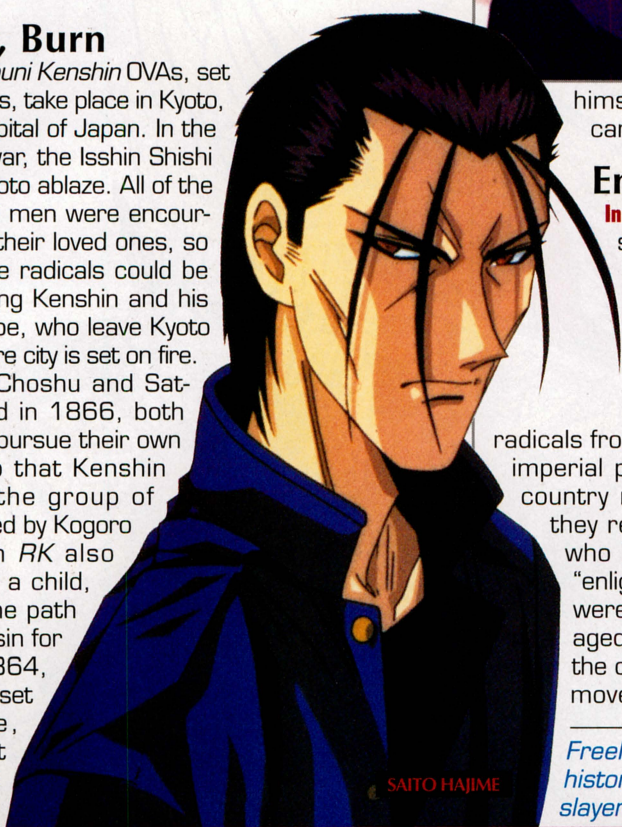
REALITY CHECK **Luckily for Kenshin, the diabolical Shishio (left) wasn't real.**

THE EVENTS

Burn, Baby, Burn

In Rurouni: The *Rurouni Kenshin* OVAs, set before the TV series, take place in Kyoto, at the time the capital of Japan. In the midst of the civil war, the Isshin Shishi plot to set all of Kyoto ablaze. All of the other Isshin Shishi men were encouraged to evacuate their loved ones, so the damage to the radicals could be minimized—including Kenshin and his previous wife Tomoe, who leave Kyoto just before the entire city is set on fire.

In Reality: Before Choshu and Satsuma were united in 1866, both fought violently to pursue their own goals. The group that Kenshin fought for was the group of Choshu radicals, led by Kogoro Katsura—who in *RK* also found Kenshin as a child, and set him on the path to being an assassin for the radicals. In 1864, the Choshu group set Kyoto on fire, destroying almost 80 percent of the capital. Katsura himself was actually against this plan, but it was carried on despite his objections.



SAITO HAJIME

Enlight It Up

In Rurouni: Much later than the OVAs, the second season of the *RK* TV series finds Kenshin in Kyoto where he's pitted against the fictional Shishio, a former hitokiri himself. With memories of the civil war and the events that led up to the Restoration, the two settle their differences once and for all in Kyoto, where it all started.

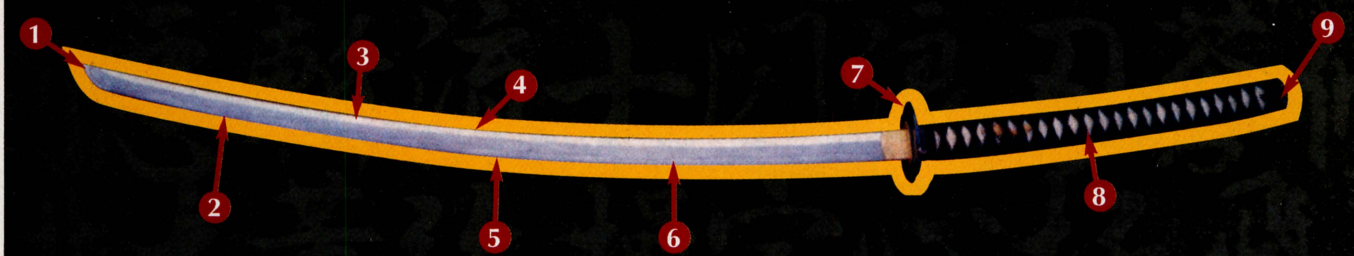
In Reality: How'd it start there? Well, impatient radicals from Satsuma stormed into Kyoto and seized the imperial palace on January 3, 1868. Proclaiming the country must be handed back to the imperial family, they restored the government to Prince Mutushito, who later took the name Emperor Meiji, meaning "enlightened government." Once the shogun's troops were driven out of Kyoto, the new government managed to wrestle a peaceful surrender of Edo, ending the civil war. Later that year, the imperial capital was moved to Edo, which was renamed...Tokyo!

Freelance writer Bamboo Dong was based on the historical Bamboo Kong, who was the feared Mario-slayer of early 1980s Ft. Collins, Colorado.

SLICE OF LIFE

THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF A SAMURAI? HIS SWORD!

1 KISSAKI sword tip , 2 MONOUCHI the cutting part of the Ha (#5), 3 HI blood groove, 4 MINE back of the blade, 5 HA cutting edge of the blade, about 4-8 inches from the kissaki, 6 KOSHI the part of the sword approximately 8 inches from the tsuba, 7 TSUBA sword guard, 8 TSUKA sword handle, 9 TSUKA GASHIRA tip of the sword handle.



BOKKEN These wooden swords are used by many for practice, but Kaoru still manages to hurt Kenshin with them pretty badly!

KATANA All the best samurai had their swords custom-made for them. No two of these traditional Japanese swords are alike.

SAKABATOU In order to reduce death and injury, Kenshin uses a reverse-blade sword against his enemies. They were primarily used like sickles for cutting crops at harvest time.

SHINAI The bamboo swords that Yahiko uses are used in practice and also the martial art of *kendo*. ■ BD

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What's Your SIGN?

The 'Fruits Basket' Guide to the Chinese Zodiac

When we think of the Chinese zodiac, we think of animals on restaurant placemats and beautiful naked people. You should too, if you've read TOKYOPOP's manga or watched FUNimation's anime of *Fruits Basket*. The hit anime and manga has put an entirely new spin on Chinese mythology by cursing 12 members of the Sohma family to turn into the animals of the Chinese zodiac—and the cat, who was tricked out of the zodiac by the rat—when hugged by a member of the opposite sex. But when they revert to human form, their pants don't come back! Whee!

Wanna know what the Chinese think of you? Then check out the zodiac placemat to figure out your personality, as well as the appropriate *Fruits Basket* character, based on the year you were born. Just make sure you keep your clothes on!





Rooster
1969, 1981, 1993

Roosters are devoted thinkers and workers, but they also tend to be loners with relationship troubles. The quiet personal lackey of family head Akito, Kureno is a manga-exclusive Sohma. He may have *some* trouble with relationships, but he gets along rather well with Uo-chan (woo!).



Dog
1970, 1982, 1994

The dog is faithful and honest, although possibly a fault-finder and emotionally subtle. Shigure may not be as "vibrant" as Ayame, but he's a fair landlord despite his destructive tenants (read: Yuki and Kyo). Perhaps following Western animalistic references more than Eastern, Shigure's also a bit of a dog when it comes to teenage girls.



Monkey
1980, 1992, 2004

The monkey is very versatile and clever, yet can have a short attention span; the attention problem certainly *sounds* like Ritsu, since one minute he's contemplating suicide and the next he's throwing his arms and begging for forgiveness from bemused bystanders. He's quite smart, but his insecurity hinders him from getting almost anything done.





Ram
1979, 1991, 2003

The ram is elegant and artistic, puzzled and pessimistic, successful yet timid. Intelligent and eloquent Hiro is only timid around his crush Kisa, unfortunately. The rest of the time he's shooting insults from the hip (with appropriate sound effects) and in general being the worst little brat on the face of the planet.





Horse
1978, 1990, 2002

The horse is popular and smart, but hard-working and independent, and may have a weakness for the opposite sex. Rin, also a manga-only character, is the tough-and-hot chick of the Sohma family; she marches down her own path with her peon-stomping boots. Yet her weakness seems to lean in the direction of Hatsuharu...



Pig
1971, 1983, 1995

Honest and chivalrous, pigs follow their goals with gusto, though they may have a bit of a temper despite a dislike of fighting. Polite Kagura's enthusiasm is reflected in her undying affection for an unresponsive Kyo (the cat), and she *does* feel bad when she lets her temper fly...often since it involves pounding Kyo flat and breaking nice things.

Rat
1972, 1984, 1996

Those born in the year of the rat are charming, hard-working perfectionists, but they may have quick fuses and critical streaks. Beautiful Yuki's got perfect and loved down pat, but rub him the wrong way and he bites—even in adorable rodent form.

Ox
1973, 1985, 1997

Quiet, patient, and conservative, the ox still has a bad temper. Hatsuharu's Ox-mode has cow-like black and white splotches and his mood does too. In "white" mode he's calm and laid-back; when he's turns "black" he's aggressive and violent, and tries to beat up Yuki and Kyo. So when not on a rampage, sure, he's patient.

Tiger
1974, 1986, 1998

Sensitive and deep-thinking, the tiger has trouble with authority and decisiveness but can be quite brave. Vulnerable little Kisa is courageous deep down (though her first appearance may fool you) and she thinks long and hard before she opens her mouth. She's also very, very cute.

hake
77, 1989, 2001

snake is smart, rich, and vain; ough snakes like to help others, they 't always believe in judgment outside eir own. Snakes are also attractive, so attractive implies "pretty enough to ide chromosomes" then Ayame fits the oill (as well as a wide variety of skirts). He likes to help people, but he likes to help them *his* way. This usually involves costumes.

Dragon
1976, 1988, 2000

The dragon is energetic but easily-angered, eccentric, and exciting. This is also the complete *opposite* of Hatori, as the tragic doctor usually just stares into space. But most of Hatori's zodiac references are a joke, anyway; he turns into a supercute seahorse, since the Japanese call seahorses "baby dragons!"

Rabbit
1975, 1987, 1999

The rabbit is virtuous, even-tempered, affectionate, and very cute, but in a far more disturbing fashion; this loving high schooler (who looks like a 10-year-old Dutch girl) has a loaded father, and tends to hop from place to place.

Freelance writer Lianne Sentar is looking for pants in all the wrong places.

TINY TOONS

PRESENTING A SHORT STORY ON THE LONG HISTORY OF THE LI'L SD GUNDAMS IN JAPAN

BY ADAM ARNOLD

It has been said that *Gundam* is the *Star Trek* of Japan. Both sci-fi epics have been around for decade, have seen countless incarnations and chapters—but only one had the courage to shrink down the main characters, enlarge their heads and strip away all seriousness. So *SD Gundam* wins.

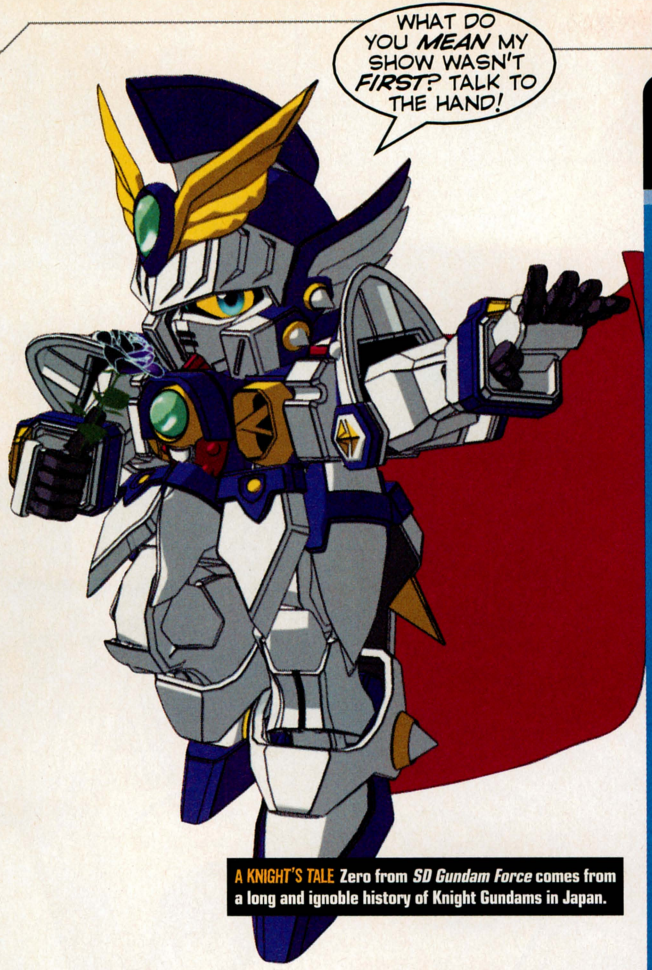
Currently airing on Cartoon Network's Toonami block, *SD Gundam Force* (a.k.a. *Superior Defender*) is the new CG Gundam series from Bandai which teams vertically-challenged, human-sized Mobile Suits alongside human characters in a struggle to decide the fate of Neotopia. "*SD* is really an antithesis of what everyone has come to expect from Gundam," says Bandai marketing manager Jerry Chu. "It's fun and light-hearted and the characters are darn cute, but at the same time, these SD Gundams can still kick major mecha butt!"

While the concept of squished mecha might seem new to American TV, it is by no means the first time *Gundam* has entered the super-deformed genre.

The date was August 20, 1985, and a new line of PVC Gundams began appearing in toy vending machines all across Japan. While obviously *Mobile Suit Gundam* mecha, they featured squat little bodies and oversized heads, which soon came to be known as "super deformed" or "SD." The success of this line would eventually lead to the creation of the *SD Gundam BB Senshi Series* line of pellet firing model kits in 1987. Never one to miss an opportunity to place a popular model kit design into an anime, Sunrise began work on a special direct-to-video OVA based around these super-cute Mobile Suits.

As the serious *Char's Counterattack* movie was concluding the struggle between Amuro Ray and Char Aznable, *Mobile Suit SD Gundam Mk I* was effectively lampooning every Gundam convention through wacky sight gags, groan-inducing word puns, some potty humor and even a little fan service.

SMALL SOLDIER *SD Gumdam Force*'s Captain Gundam packs a lot of fire power in his small frame.



A KNIGHT'S TALE Zero from *SD Gundam Force* comes from a long and ignoble history of Knight Gundams in Japan.

The initial OVAs were little longer than a half an hour each, with either two or three, eight to twelve-minute comedy shorts in each episode. The Looney Tunes-style sketches began by pulling characters from all Gundam series and continuities, with their original voice actors in most cases—but by *Mk IV*, the franchise had begun tossing in brand-new Mobile Suits. These included the Knight Gundam and the samurai-themed Musha Gundam, direct ancestors of *SD Gundam Force* stars Zero the Winged Knight and Bakunetsumaru, respectively. The original Knight and Musha Gundams became popular enough to warrant their own SD Gundam series, and several Japan-only videogames, too.

In all, seven OVAs and three movies were made between 1988 and 1993 before *SD Gundam* effectively dropped off the anime radar. Bandai currently has no plans to bring over these old SD tales, hints Chu, "...but never say never."

While you're enjoying the newest incarnation on Cartoon Network, we've got a comprehensive list of the previous vertically-challenged mecha that the *SD Gundam Force* are standing on (that's the sidebar, to the right). It might not be a long list, but hey, that's to be expected!

Georgia-based freelance writer Adam Arnold may be short in size, stature, money and heart, but...well, that's it, really.

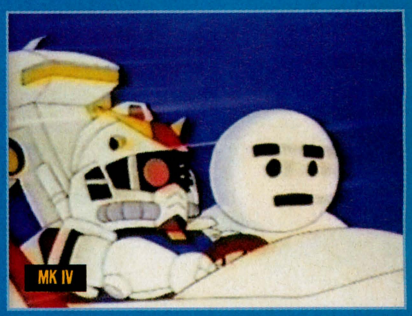
SD GUNDAM SERIES GUIDE

MOBILE SUIT SD GUNDAM MK I (1988) Comprised of three unrelated shorts, *Mk I* has the distinct pleasure of being the OVA that rocked the serious Gundam universe. The first short, "Will Gundam Stand Up!?," takes a trip through the One Year War by answering such burning questions as whether Char's Zeong is wearing a dress. The other shorts are "Menace of the Zeon Hotel?" and "SD Olympics."

MOBILE SUIT SD GUNDAM MK II (1989) *Mk II* ups the ante with two more shorts, "The Rolling Colony Affair" and "Gundam Legend." The first starts out with the casts and their mecha all going to watch the Gundam gals perform in a stage show and ends up with a colony falling to Earth. The *Planet of the Apes*-like twist ending is priceless. "Gundam Legend" is a jab at the conventions of 8-bit RPGs such as *Dragon Warrior* (*Dragon Quest* in Japan) and *Final Fantasy*.



SD GUNDAM'S COUNTERATTACK (1989) Trading some of its comedy antics in favor of a few musical numbers, this theatrical release plops the Gundam characters into different private schools; primarily the Nu School for Boys or the Zeta Academy for Girls. Char and Haman set up a Boys and Girls Social Club between the two schools, but only beautiful people can attend. Enraged, Amuro and Camilla enlist the help of the Counterattack school in order to crash the event. Oh, and did we mention that Amuro tries to pee on Char?



MOBILE SUIT SD GUNDAM MK III (1990) Haman in a bunny costume. 'Nuff said.

MOBILE SUIT SD GUNDAM MK IV (1990) Watching the combined casts of the Universal Century timeline and the Musha Gundams go head-to-head in a *Wacky Races* spoof is just too side-splittingly funny not to enjoy. The second short pits the SD Gundams against their full-sized counterparts! Warning: don't drink milk while watching this one.

MOBILE SUIT SD GUNDAM MK V (1990) Between their popularity and sheer belligerence, the Musha Gundams completely take over. This single OVA wraps up the *Mk* series with two shorts before moving onto the specials highlighting the Musha and Knight Gundams.



SD GUNDAM GAIDEN (1990) The chances of finding all four volumes of the anime that comprise *SD Gundam Gaiden*, the longest of the *SD* series, are next to impossible. This series is a side-story chronicling the adventures of the Knight Gundam and his crew against a cute li'l "Satan" Gundam.



SD GUNDAM SCRAMBLE (1991) In this 14-minute theatrical movie, Warrior Gundam, Knight Gundam and Command Gundam answer the question, "Can you kill others to achieve eternal life?" The answer is given in battle! (It's "no.")

SD GUNDAM: DAWN OF PAPARU (1991) This single OVA included the theatrically released "Scramble," above, but also told the only known story involving a Gundam marriage in "The Bride of Suginami."

SD GUNDAM FESTIVAL (1993) You'd think that if the battlin' Knight Gundam and Satan Gundam went off and left us, it would leave a lasting peace. But this movie says you're wrong, as a new evil group threatens the kingdom. Sorry. ■ **AA**



NOT JUST FOR KIDS Éclair (left) and Lumière can prove they're move than just pretty faces and tiny skirts.

MAKING the GRADE

WHEN GORGEOUS GIRLS COLLIDE WITH GALACTIC CONSPIRACIES, IT MEANS WAR! WELCOME TO FUNIMATION'S 'KIDDY GRADE'

BY REBECCA BUNDY

How can you make epic space battles even better? If you said "by adding hot chicks in short skirts"—and we know you did—then we've got the anime for you.

Kiddy Grade is definitely the answer to your prayers, but these short-skirted women have enough super-powers to fight their own battles. In October 2002, Japan was introduced to *Kiddy Grade*, a series set in a future emerged from a post-intergalactic war. The Galactic Organization of Trade and Tariffs (GOTT) was created to maintain economic stability and peace throughout the galaxy, and it's the job of GOTT's famed ES (Encounter of Shadows) members to respond to challenges against the peace. Members Éclair and Lumière are ready for those challenges, but they'll have to face off against some of the most powerful foes the galaxy has to offer—and a few enemies they never expected.

Behind this high-energy series is acclaimed space-opera director Keiji Gotoh (*Nadesico*) and the talents of Gonzo Digimation (*Full Metal Panic!*), so you can expect nothing less than stellar animation and a story arc that'll keep you tuned in for more. "We expect *Kiddy Grade* to do very well among U.S. fans due to its great character development and exciting plot twists," assures Gen Fukunawa, CEO of FUNimation. "Fan anticipation has been very high."

FUNimation will begin releasing this series on DVD on February 10, but you don't have to wait that long to get a sneak peek at the episodes to come. If you don't want to be spoiled, this isn't the article for you. For those who can't wait, read on!

1. DEPTH/SPACE

ES members Éclair and Lumière are assigned by their commander, Eclipse, to escort Galactic Union (GU) Inspector Armbrust to planet Medeia so that peaceful negotiations can begin between Medeia and planet Faunus. Faunus's corrupt space army stands in their way, and Éclair and Lumière must use all their firepower to defeat them!

WATCH CLOSELY: Armbrust is actually transporting the president of Faunus within a giant metal suitcase. Hope he can make it through spaceport security!

2. TIGHT/BIND

Éclair and Lumière join with ES members Alv and Dvergr to recover a stolen gravity control unit that could revolutionize the already-destructive Gravity Bomb. Unbeknownst to them, Armbrust stole the gravity unit in an attempt to capture a notorious arms dealer, who is then brought down by all four ES members!

WATCH CLOSELY: Pay close attention to the pair that pass Alv and Dvergr in the GOTT lobby; you'll see Tweedledee and Tweedledum again later.

3. PRISONER/ESCORT

Éclair and Lumière are ordered to escort a couple of perps to prison. Their leader, Drake, is under the protection of a powerful organization, but betrayal is in the air when his rescue squad doubles as his executioner. Éclair saves Drake and punishes those who tried to kill him.



WATCH CLOSELY: Drake believes that interacting with non-native Earthlings will taint his pure blood. Looks like someone's afraid of cooties!



BABES WITH ARMS **When the situation calls for it, Lumière can use a gun as well as her powers.**

4. HIGH/SPEED

Éclair heads out on a solo mission to track down Foxy, who's been implanted with illegal strength enhancements. Foxy turns out to be good, and the two women combine their powers to take down the cyborgs who try and thwart Éclair's rescue attempt!

WATCH CLOSELY: One of the cyborgs knew Éclair by her hair and fighting style; guess she used that lipstick whip in one of her past lives!

5. DAY/OFF

When Éclair is caught in the middle of a gang war, she's recruited by one of the gangs to stop a child smuggling ring operated by the other. After rescuing Lumière from smugglers, the two ES members bring both gangs down.

BAD ENGRISH: *Kiddy Grade* is famous for mis-translations showing up in the animation. For example, Lumière is held in a container with the word "Rock" instead of "Lock" on its data screen. Maybe they used to keep their Def Leppard cassettes in there.

6. TWIN/STAR

Éclair and ES members Sinistra and Dextera help fellow GOTT operative Mrs. Padushka uncover the suspects behind a recent string of airplane burglaries. An intense battle ensues in the belly of a plane, but the ES members as usual kick butt and take names.



FLASHY ENTRANCE **Whether she's showing off or making tea, Éclair (right) can get the job done.**

WATCH CLOSELY: Mrs. Padushka informs Éclair that she's leaving GOTT since she's pregnant. Expect her and her baby to make a guest appearance in the final episode.

7. TRIAL/CHILD

Viola and Cesario help Éclair and Lumière transport a young boy named Timothy to claim his inheritance: the exclusive ownership of a huge corporation! The Nobles aren't happy about this, but the four ES mem-

A TEST OF SKILLS... A BATTLE OF WILLS!

犬夜叉



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bers help Timothy prove himself worthy of the Noble title.
WATCH CLOSELY: Pay attention to those crazy Nobles; they'll play an important part in the last few episodes.

8. FORBIDDEN/INSTRUMENT

Éclair and Lumière join forces with siblings Tweedledee and Tweedledum to uncover a smuggling ring that deals in planet-destroying missiles! When discovered, the smugglers activate one of the explosives in an attempt to destroy the evidence. It takes the full force of the ES team (plus Alv and Dvergr) to bring down these king missiles!
BAD ENGRISH: The actual title for episode 8 is



SHAKESPEARE'S SISTER Cesario (left) informs Viola that she's sitting on Pikachu.

"Fobidden/Instrument." So much for spellcheckers.

9. MIRAGE/SNARE

Éclair and Lumière are sent to investigate some mysterious disappearances on the planet Dardanos. They discover that the government has been secretly brainwashing people, and have killed the authorities who discovered the truth! Éclair destroys the transmitters, but they have a negative effect on her mind.
WATCH CLOSELY: When Éclair's senses are overwhelmed by the brainwashing transmitters, memories from past lives begin to surface. She can also pick up over 200 cable channels!

10. REBIRTH/SLAVE

Éclair confronts her mental dark side, which taunts her with the knowledge that she will always be a killer! Later, she and Lumière rescue A-ou and Un-ou, two ES members; Éclair pulls off a dangerous maneuver, and ends up in the hospital for her troubles.
WATCH CLOSELY: One of Éclair's flashbacks includes a young woman holding a baby boy. Expect him to show up later on in the series.

11. SET/FREE

Eclipse sends Éclair and Lumière to help the Nobles quell a peasant revolt. At a demonstration, the Nobles kill some of the protestors! Outraged, Éclair and Lumière defy their orders and attack the Nobles' army. As a result, they're erased from the GOTT files and declared fugitives!
WATCH CLOSELY: No animals were harmed in the making of this episode because even in her rage, Éclair fights against her darker side and doesn't kill anyone.

12. FROZEN/LIFE

Cornered on a planet by the majority of GOTT's army, Éclair and Lumière are inflicted with a virus that causes painful swelling and immobilizes them! Though Armbrust betrayed their location to GOTT, he gives them the vaccine and orders the army to let them escape.

13. CONFLICT/DESTINY

With Éclair and Lumière on the run, Eclipse sends A-ou and Un-ou out to kill them! The battle between the two takes

GOTT HEROES?

THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO MAKE THE GRADE

The Galactic Organization for Trade and Tariffs (GOTT) is called upon when trouble brews within the galaxy, and the nearly unstoppable ES members are sent out to deal with the toughest peacekeeping cases. Though most members are powerful on their own, their strength is doubled when joined with their partners.


ÉCLAIR


LUMIÈRE

ÉCLAIR AND LUMIÈRE Éclair may act like a child, but her Hulk-like powers are second to none. Lumière's mastery over the electronic world gets them both out of tight fixes. Both names are French for "flash" and "light" respectively.


VIOLA


CESARIO

VIOLA AND CESARIO Viola is a sweet child, while Cesario is the silent partner. When holding hands, these two can control objects on the molecular level. Both come from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.


TWEEDLEDEE


TWEEDLEDUM

TWEEDLEDEE AND TWEEDLEDUM When this brother and sister pair joins forces, they create a powerful attack that can crush anything. Look to *Alice in Wonderland* for the origin of their names.


ALV


DVERGR

ALV AND DVERGR By far the meanest pair, this mother/daughter combo can absorb energy as if they were batteries. Their names are Nordic for "elf" and "dwarf," respectively.


A-OU


UN-OU

A-OU AND UN-OU Once mercenaries, this energetic pair uses heightened sight and hearing to gather information. These two are named after statues that guard the Nehou Temple in Japan.


DEXTERA


SINISTRA

DEXTERA AND SINISTRA These two can cut through anything when they're in their spaceships. Their names are Latin for "right" and "left" respectively.


ARMBURST

ARMBRUST An inspector for the Galactic Union. Nicknamed "Magician," Armbrust follows Éclair and Lumière on most of their missions. He's never without his trusty suitcase.


ECLIPSE

ECLIPSE The commander of GOTT, her power is what gives the ES members their immortality. She can also travel to any place she wants with a thought. ■ **RB**

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place in space and on land, ending when both Lumière and Un-ou are badly wounded. Since they failed to kill the girls, A-ou and Un-ou have become fugitives as well.

WATCH CLOSELY: A-ou mentions ES members are immortal. If you look carefully, you'll notice Éclair has a few gray hairs.

14. STEEL/HEART

Tweedledee and Tweedledum reluctantly infect Éclair and Lumière's ship and mecha with the assassin program Hashish. They are now programmed to kill the two, but when the girls immobilize them, they self-destruct! The final line is drawn, and Éclair and Lumière decide to attack GOTT's headquarters.

WATCH CLOSELY: Éclair starts to regularly use an attack that involves shooting black energy from her hands.

15. BREAK/DOWN

The entire force of the ES team is sent against Éclair and Lumière as they blow up the GOTT headquarters bit by bit. As if destroying the building wasn't enough, they also assassinate Eclipse!

WATCH CLOSELY: Pay special attention to the necklaces that the girls wear at the end of the episode. This is the first indicator that Alv and Dvergr are masquerading as Éclair and Lumière.

16. LOOK/BACK

A flashback details what Éclair was like when she first woke up in her most recent body, devoid of the memories from her past. In the present, Armbrust briefs his supervisor on the events leading up to the destruction of the GOTT building. They order him to keep an eye on Éclair now that she's assumed the role of vice-commander of GOTT.

17. PHANTASM/REBORN

Éclair orders Sinistra and Dextera to train the newest ES members, who are actually six teams of Éclair and Lumière clones! Later, Éclair holds a press conference where she declares that GOTT will now be a more powerful force. Two mysterious motorcycle riders crash the meeting and speak out against Éclair and GOTT before making their escape.

BAD ENGRISH: The banner used at the press conference says "Galactic Organizatoin of Trade and Tariffs." Hopefully they got a refund from the printing company.

18. UNMASKED/FACE

Éclair orders all available GOTT forces to kill the two riders. During the pursuit, two of the clones disobey her orders. When Éclair tries to kill the clones, the masked riders save them and reveal themselves as the *real* Éclair and Lumière in new bodies!

WATCH CLOSELY: Only one ES member can resurrect the other ES members: Eclipse! As an added bonus, she gives Éclair a slightly larger pair of breasts.



FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH! **Lumière may look young, but in actuality, she's hundreds of years old.**

19. TAKE/REVENGE

Turns out that Alv and Dvergr used their powers to absorb Éclair and Lumière's powers and appearance. A long fight ensues and Eclipse, who's arrived with a newer model of Éclair's old ship, ends it by killing Alv and Dvergr! Though they weren't meant to live very long, the clones are given their

CALLING THE FASHION POLICE

EXPOSING ÉCLAIR AND LUMIÈRE'S CRIMES AGAINST GOOD TASTE

MAIDS GONE WILD

Even in the beginning, these girls can't dress. Their pizza delivery outfits are a cross between a whacked-out maid and a candy cane, complete with little bellboy hats. Outfits like these should be illegal to wear in public. **(Ep. 1)**


MAID-TASTIC!

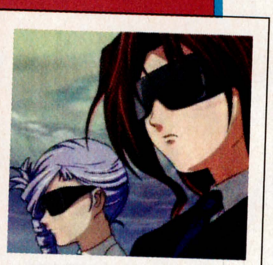
STREET FIGHTING MANIAC

On an undercover mission, Éclair wears a short Chinese dress and ties her hair up into two buns with ribbons. Instead of subtle, it looks like she just returned from a gaming or anime convention dressed as Chun Li. **(Ep. 3)**


KUNG FU FIGHTER!

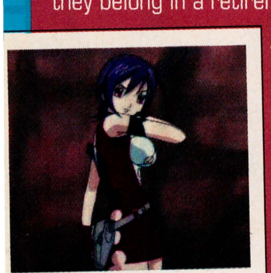
GRANNIES IN BLACK

For once the girls decide to take the conservative route and sport an *MIB*-like outfit, complete with black suit and tie. It's too bad that the sunglasses they wear are so big that they look like they belong in a retirement home. **(Ep. 14)**


NURSING HOME FUN!

AEROBICS TRAINER FROM HELL

Éclair chooses a white halter top and short Spandex dress, which gives her room to do those squats while showing off her panties. **(Ep. 18)**


BOUNCE ALERT!

KIDDY TREK

Even in her past life, Éclair couldn't dress. Wearing a lavender ensemble complete with gigantic puffy shoulders and little strategically placed badges, she looks like the cousin of a Vulcan. **(Ep. 20)** ■ **RB**


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CAT'S MEOW Éclair takes the words "cat burglar" a little too seriously.

own ships as a reward for helping during the fight.

WATCH CLOSELY: Alv wanted revenge for how the Nobles used GOTT. Think a little thing like death is going to stop her?

20. LOST/DAYS

Lumière passes out since she was having problems adjusting to her new body, with all the information she's gathered over her lives. Her dreams are a series of flashbacks detailing all the different lives Éclair and Lumière had. When she wakes, she realizes that she's lost her ability to control machines!

WATCH CLOSELY: The girl with Armbrust at the beginning of the episode is actually Mercredi, Eclipse's old secretary, in her new body!

THE KIDDY MENACE

DID 'KIDDY GRADE' EPISODE 1 GET A FORCE BOOST FROM 'STAR WARS' EPISODE 1?



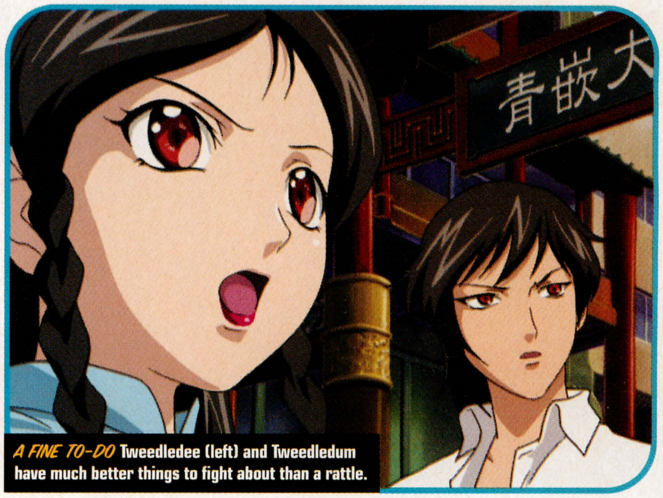


KIDDY GRADE	THE PHANTOM MENACE
The planet Faunus sets up a planet-wide blockade with its massive army.	The Trade Federation sets up a planet-wide blockade with its massive army.
ES members Éclair and Lumiere are sent in to aid peaceful negotiations.	Jedi Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon are sent in to aid peaceful negotiations.
Bad guys attempt to kill Éclair and Lumiere and claim the two never arrived. Our heroes fight back using mysterious powers.	Bad guys attempt to kill Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon and claim the two never arrived. Our heroes fight back using Jedi powers.
Their main mission becomes getting Faunus' president inside the blockade.	Their main mission becomes rescuing Naboo's queen inside the blockade.
Éclair and Lumière triumph against the space fleet with the use of their own ship.	Qui-Gon's apprentice Anakin triumphs against the space fleet with the use of a borrowed ship.

21. NOUVLESSE/ARC

Chevalier D'Autrich, head of GOTT and GU's Economic Department, is given the news of his dismissal from both organizations by Alv and Dvergr, who are now working for the Nobles! Upon learning this, Chevalier steals the Nobles' titanic spaceship Deucalion!

WATCH CLOSELY: Alv and Dvergr now wear masks to cover the scars on their faces, but those aren't the only wounds that were inflicted upon the pair.



A FINE TO-DO Tweedledee (left) and Tweedledum have much better things to fight about than a rattle.

22. DEMOLITION/TITAN

Alv and Dvergr confront Chevalier on Deucalion, but he traps Alv inside the Reception System Chamber and turns her into pure energy! Éclair and Lumière arrive on the Deucalion to confront Chevalier, but their chit-chat is ended abruptly when Chevalier is shot and it's discovered that Alv has actually merged with the ship!

WATCH CLOSELY: Dvergr is actually Alv's mother, and Éclair is actually Chevalier's adoptive mother; looks like the Nobles aren't the only ones who keep it in the family!

23. ANNIHILATION/ZERO

Alv traps Éclair and Lumière within the Reception System Chamber and reduces them to energy! Outside, all of the ES members, the entire GOTT army, and all the clones join forces to attack the Deucalion before it can destroy Earth. While Alv tries to gather more energy from the sun's rays, Éclair and Lumière re-form thanks to Lumière's true power: control over particles!

24. AS TIME GOES BY

Though it looks like Alv might win, Dvergr reveals Alv's weakness: her left side is completely numb! Éclair offers all of her energy to Lumière, who then uses that power to destroy the left side of the Deucalion. With its main weapon destroyed, the remaining ships make short work of what's left. Dvergr joins her daughter as she dies, and Éclair looks on as Chevalier dies from his own wounds. In the end, Éclair and Lumière return to GOTT to continue the fight for galactic peace!

Arizona-based freelance writer Rebecca Bundy fights for galactic peace Mondays, Wednesdays and alternate Sundays.


A WORLD ENGULFED BY DARKNESS
A MISSION FUELED BY FLAMES
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ASTRO BOY TOY

CHECK THE TECH SPECS ON THE REVAMPED, REVVED-UP ASTRO BOY!

BY TOM ROOT

His powers are real, but he is not.

Astro Boy, the original rock-'em sock-'em robot, is about to return to American TV with a brand new series on Kids' WB!, and he's more powerful than ever! "*Astro Boy* is an amazing project to be working on because of the history of the show and the character," enthuses Joe D'Ambrosia, executive producer of the American *Astro Boy* for Sony Pictures Television. "This new version is something the old fans will really enjoy, and it gives us a chance to introduce this incredible character and story to a whole new generation of kids."

Created by "god of manga" Osamu Tezuka over 50 years ago, the new Astro Boy series re-tells his adventures with state-of-the-art animation. Astro's tale begins when scientist Dr. Tenma created him at the Ministry of Science as a replacement for his real son, who died in an accident. The little robot is loaded with all kinds of gizmos and gadgets—and most importantly, the world's most advanced artificial brain. When Dr. Tenma goes bad and starts building evil robots, Astro becomes the ultimate force for good, protecting humans and robots alike!

We've got the inside scoop on all of Astro's amazing abilities, and now we're going to share his top-secret schematics with you! Study them with care, because with 25 new TV episodes on the way, Astro Boy will be blasting a path into your living room soon enough!

JET ROCKET ARMS Not only do jets explode into action from Astro's feet, but he's also equipped with them in his arms. He uses these forward jet blasts to slow down, but also fight! In one episode, he knocks evil robot Atlas out of the sky with an Astro-blast.

REMOTE COMMUNICATION Astro can stand in the middle of a room full of people, carry on a conversation...and nobody will suspect he's actually communicating with other robots miles away at the same time!

SUPER STRENGTH Astro Boy's much-lauded 100,000-horsepower strength is no joke. In one episode, he catches an airplane falling out of the sky! In another, Astro removes the enormous glass dome covering a stadium, flips it over, and uses it to transport thousands of people to safety. Let's see R2-D2 try that.



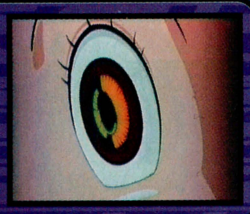
JET ROCKET FEET "Let's rocket!" Astro Boy shouts as he takes flight. What's Astro's top speed? Trust us, he's fast. Check this out—in one episode, Astro picks up a bomb, and within three seconds, he's out of the atmosphere of Metro City and in the depths of space where it explodes harmlessly.



ELECTRONIC BRAIN Astro's computerized brain is remarkable not only because it's the most advanced artificial mind ever constructed, but also because he has the emotions (called *kokoro* in Japanese) of a real human boy. The one emotion Astro lacks? Fear.



EYES Not only do Astro's eyes double as searchlights, but they also sport an X-ray function that lets the mighty mite see through objects! His telescopic vision also lets Astro see for miles around.



SUPER HEARING With auditory sensors 1,000 times more sensitive than any human or robot possesses, Astro can pick up distress calls coming from miles away and arrive in a split-second to help them.



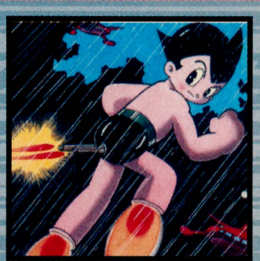
ENERGY SOURCE While the original Astro Boy ran on atomic power, the new-and-improved Astro Boy relies on something far more difficult to come by. Astro's fuel is synthesized from the crystals and powders found in the Astro Belt in outer space. It goes by the term Silicate Meta Energy (or S.M.E.), nicknamed "SAMMY."

DIGI-BEAMS Thin lasers housed in Astro's fingers could slice the bad guys into chopped meat, but he's not programmed to fight and doesn't use them in combat. Instead, he activates them to cut through almost any material.



BUTT OUT?

IN MEMORIAM: ASTRO'S BELOVED REAR-MOUNTED MACHINE GUNS



None of Astro Boy's abilites were dearer to our hearts than the twin machine guns stored in his roboheiney. They might've been strangely placed, but they took out their share of baddies attacking from the rear. The latest poop doesn't mention them being in the new show, so we guess these tush-tastic guns are behind us. Boo! ■ Robert Bricken

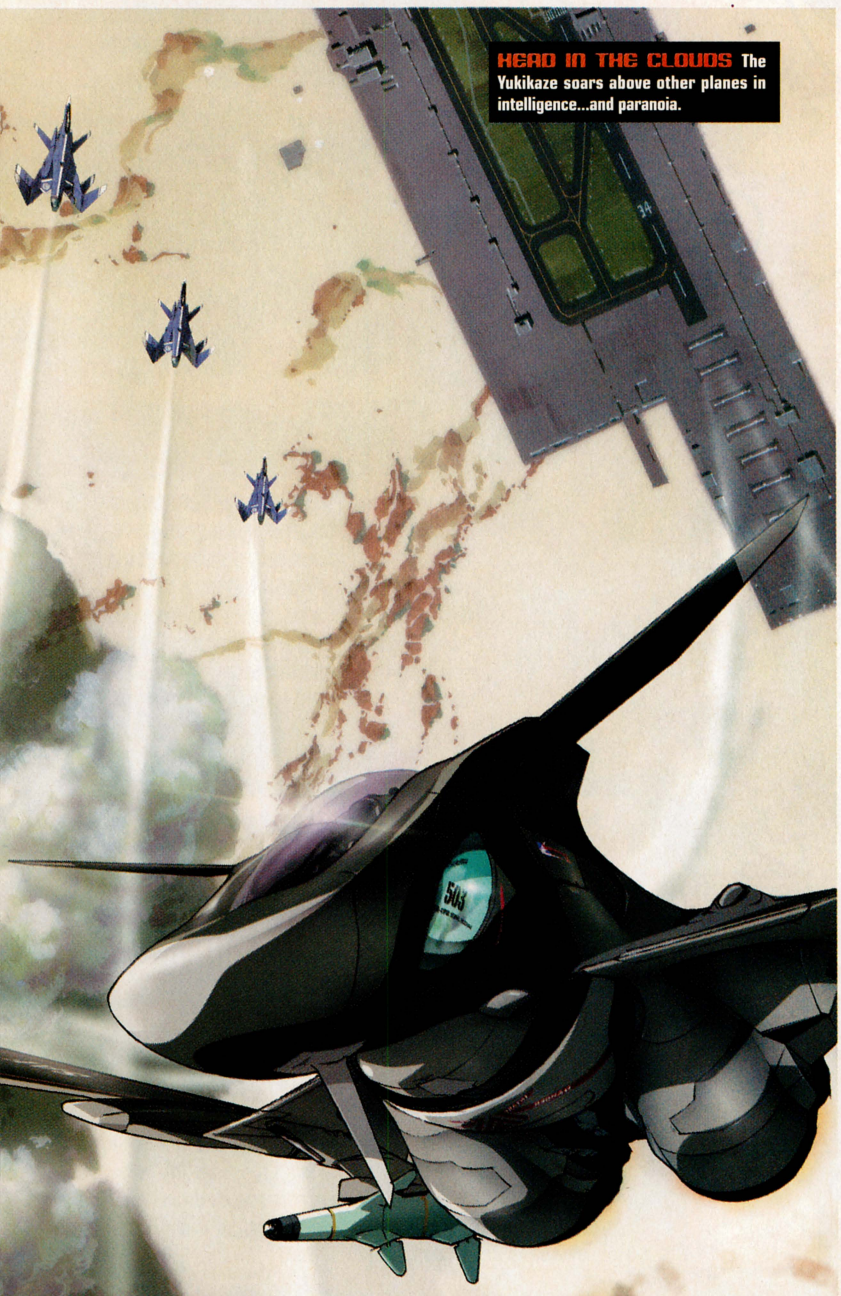
BY ALLEN DIVERS

A.I. FIVE

THE TOP 5 REASONS YOU'LL LOVE THIS SERIES

YUKIKAZE

CAN A TOP GUN AND THE WORLD'S SMARTEST JET LIBERATE HUMANITY?



HEAD IN THE CLOUDS The Yukikaze soars above other planes in intelligence...and paranoia.

In an instant, a mysterious column of fog appeared in the South Pole. Created by the mysterious alien entity called JAM, this column serves as the gateway for the invasion of Earth. The United Nations, in an effort to stop the JAM, have used the column to travel to the far off planet Fairy, to face the JAM on their own ground.

Enter Rei Fukai and his jet the Yukikaze, part of the air surveillance force. The Yukikaze is a sophisticated artificial intelligence machine that Fukai has come to trust more than any one else. When Yukikaze identifies a supposedly friendly fighter as one of the JAM, Rei begins a terrifying journey of deceit and paranoia.

One of the acclaimed Studio Gonzo's most recent works, *Yukikaze* relies on Gonzo's amazing experience of mixing CG and traditional animation to create another fantastic tale."*Yukikaze* is the ultimate audio and videophile smorgasnoard featuring an intense combination of mind-blowing CG animation and a plot so deep you won't know where to step," promises Bandai marketing manager Jerry Chu.

Filled with dramatic aerial combat and nerve-racking drama, *Yukikaze* is a high-flying action-thriller sure to intrigue all mecha fans. Not convinced you should pick up the first of the five-part OVA series when Bandai releases on February 17? Read on.

5. NO NEED TO WAIT FOR *ID4* PART 2!

In alien invasion movies, it's all the Earth can do to keep from being totally enslaved. But can you imagine what would have happened in *Independence Day* if Jeff Goldblum and Will Smith had lead the U.N. straight to the home planet of the alien invaders? That's *Yukikaze*! Besides a true blockbuster in the tradition of all the great alien war movies, it takes it much, *much* further!

4. IT'S MADE BY GONZO THE GREAT

Two issues ago, Studio Gonzo's *Last Exile* nabbed the "A.I.5." Why? Because Gonzo really is that good, and



VIEW FROM THE TOP As usual, Gonzo uses 2D and 3D animation to create panoramic vistas that look better than reality.

their *Yukikaze* is no exception. Besides story, design and the pure artistic genius that they pack into each anime they make, we challenge you to even figure out there the cel animation stops and the CG begins.

3. YOU'LL TAKE A RIDE INTO THE DANGER ZONE

At its heart, *Yukikaze* is the story of one man and his jet fighter taking on all comers. Every dogfight sticks meticulously to real aerial combat, right from the dogfights of movies like *Top Gun* and *Independence Day*. Plus, you can't get better than the tried and true story of the military taking on an advance alien race with whatever they have on hand.

2. WANT CONSPIRACIES? THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

With a premise right out of *The X-Files*, *Yukikaze* seems to spew conspiracies left and right as the story unfolds. And we're not talking about simple, one-man-trying-to-gain-more-power-type stuff, we're talking major, John Carpenter's *The Thing*-type paranoia where the characters don't know actually friend or foe! To top it all off, Rei only trusts one person, and that's the Yukikaze...but Yukikaze is starting to see the JAM everywhere!

1. IT'S SO REAL, IT'S SCARY!

The producers of *Yukikaze* put a big task in front of the designers to come up with a design for the main star of this series, Yukikaze. The task was simple, show the world something they've never seen before, but make it believable. Yukikaze walks its own path with a design that is both human and alien at the same time. To complicate matters, Yukikaze is more than a piece of equipment; it's a contributing character that undergoes change throughout the series.

Freelance writer Allen Divers makes a tasty tuna casserole that is also both alien and human at the same time.

IN PLANE SIGHT

MEET THE FOLKS WHO ARE SAVING OUR PLANET. SALUTE, PEOPLE, SALUTE!



REI FUKAI Lieutenant and loner, Rei is promoted to lead pilot in the Yukikaze. Rei seems to be one step from being stripped of his rank and court-martialed, but friends in high places keep an eye on him. He trusts only one other thing, and that's Yukikaze.



JAMES "JACK" BUKHAR A major in the Air Force and Rei's commander, Jack used to be the lead pilot of Yukikaze. Being Rei's only ally, Jack uses his position to keep Rei out of trouble. Jack is also the only other person who understands that Yukikaze is more than a combat A.I.



LYDIA COOLEY Brigadier General and head of the Air Force. She comes across as a cold woman, but allows Jack to watch over Rei. She takes charge of the situation as Yukikaze seems to uncover a conspiracy within the Air Force itself.



LYNN JACKSON A civilian back on Earth trying to write the true story behind the JAM invasion. ■ AD

A.I. CANDY

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCES ARE EVERYWHERE! RUN FOR THE HILLS!



YUKIKAZE (*Yukikaze*) The United Nations surveillance aircraft combat computer A.I. meant to replace humans in combat. Smart, but rather paranoid. Dirty Secret: Prefers *Iron Eagle* over *Top Gun*.

MAHORO ANDOU (*Mahoromatic*) A Vesper combat Android model V-1046-R and part-time maid, Mahoro is a bit of a prude, but will protect her master Suguru to the death. Dirty Secret: Never dusts the top shelf.

CANAL (*Lost Universe*) As a spaceship's computer A.I., Canal can project a cute hologram to represent herself. A pretty smile on a pretty face, she's a tough one to take out on the town. Dirty Secret: That universe? *She* lost it.

IKARIYA (*Hand Maid May*) Despite coming across as a surly squidbot, Ikariya enjoys sitting back with his main squeeze, Rena, watching *Tornado of Love* while sipping a nice cup of tea. Dirty Secret: Can only doggy-paddle.

K.I.T.T. (Knight Rider) The smartest black Camero in the world and a bona fide '80s star. He may have been needlessly fussy, but he had optional hyperboost. Dirty Secret: Addicted to new car smell. ■ AD




CASULL AUTO

LAST MAN STANDING

A BATTLE YOU THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER SEE

VAMPIRE HUNTER D VS. ARUCARD



D

Vampire Hunter	PROFESSION	Hunter of Vampires
50%	PERCENT VAMPIRE	100%
Crucifix-shaped sword	WEAPON	.454 Casull Longslide
Talking demon who lives in D's palm	BEST FRIEND	"Police girl" Victoria Seras
AB- with twist of lemon	FAVORITE MEAL	McNuggets dipped in O+



ARUCARD

D: Thousands of years after the apocalypse, humankind is preyed upon by vampires. That's where D comes in. Half-human and half-vampire, he'd be your typical strong, silent loner—if his left hand wasn't possessed by a demon who constantly makes fun of him. His half-human side means he has few typical vampire weaknesses. Between the demon's powers and his mystical neutralizing pendant, D is nobody's pushover.

ARUCARD: The most impressive weapon in Britain's vampire-killing Hellsing Organization's arsenal is Arucard. A shape-shifter whose powers seem nearly limitless, he can suffer incredible damage and still keep rising to battle again. Whether walking though walls, blasting apart foes with blessed silver bullets, or using his awesome Cromwell Initiative attack, Arucard is one dangerous vampire.

THE BATTLE BEGINS

The moon hangs low on a foggy night in London as the vampire hunter known as D slips through the streets. "This is where Jack the Ripper used to hang out," his demonic hand snickers. "Scared yet?"

A deep voice responds, "If you're not scared, it's because you're too stupid." D stops in his tracks. Through a nearby wall of solid stone, Arucard materializes. "I thought I'd be a gentleman, and save you the trouble of searching for me," Arucard smirks.

Wasting no time, D draws his sword and takes a mighty hack at Arucard, who merely fades away. He reappears behind D, who whirls with a flurry of sword strikes, each of them barely missing as Arucard dodges and weaves nonchalantly.

Arucard waits for a break in D's attack, then swiftly draws his handgun. But as he takes aim, D leaps forward and slices the barrel neatly in half. Thrown off balance, Arucard gives D an opening, and D's next strike chops Arucard into two parts, which fall to the ground, spraying blood.

"Nice work!" D's left hand crows. "Now let's split—no pun intended." But D sees the work is far from done. Arucard's laughter fills the night as his body morphs back together, blood oozing back into his wounds.

As if to himself, Arucard intones, "Unlocking limited release control system to level one. Situation A."

"Eh?" D's left hand says. "What's he doing?"

"Cromwell approval in effect," Arucard finishes, and then something very, very bad happens. Suddenly there is no more Arucard. A formless dark mass launches toward D, enveloping him. The swirling mass is peppered with glowing eyes and fangs. D takes a few helpless swings, then raises his left palm. "This is where you come in," D tells his demon partner. The demon hand casts a counter-spell, which begins drawing energy away from Arucard's attack.

But it isn't enough. The last thing D sees is an eight-eyed dog's head, coming straight for him.

THE WINNAH:

Arucard studies the pieces of his handgun morosely. "Such a shame." Tipping his hat, he fades away into nothingness. His disembodied voice has one parting comment: "I thank you, vampire hunter. This is more entertainment than I've had in a very long time."

But neither D nor his hand seems to hear him as they lie motionless in the street.

Are there any cataclysmic anime match-ups you'd like to see on these pages? Give us the skinny at AnimeInsider@aol.com now!

this month's battle drawn by SAM LOTFI

BY BOB MARSHALL

REANIMETED

CLASSIC ANIME FROM DAYS OF YORE:

CAPTAIN HERLOCK

The concept of a rogue sailing through outer space like a pirate of yore is almost as old as the space-fantasy genre itself. No one, however, more successfully or quintessentially embodies this persona than Leiji Matsumoto's famed Captain Herlock!

Think we mean *Harlock*? Well, yes and no. While several titles starring the beloved space pirate have come to America calling him Harlock, creator Leiji Matsumoto recently went on record as saying that the *official* English transliteration and spelling of the name is "Herlock"—and in fact, it was always meant to be Herlock. Rest assured, however, that the character is still the same old space pirate we all know and love.

Matsumoto's pirate hero can trace his roots back to 1953. One of Matsumoto's first manga featured an Old West gunfighter in those days, rather then a 30th century space warrior, not called Herlock, but definitely wearing a skull-and-crossbones plastered on his chest and bearing a swashbuckler-esque aura. Over the next decade, the mysterious man with the Jolly Roger emblem became a recurring character throughout Matsumoto's various manga series, appearing in some war comics, more westerns and several futuristic SF tales. By the early seventies, Herlock had evolved into a patch-eyed space wanderer, living under the "Flag of Freedom" (the skull-and-crossbones).

In 1977, Matsumoto created the definitive Herlock manga, titled simply *Space Pirate Captain Herlock*, which set the tone for the character we're familiar with today. Matsumoto then took the property to Toei Animation, which developed a show fairly faithful to the 1977 comic, premiering it on March 14, 1978.

A PIRATE'S LIFE

By the end of the 30th century, the populace of Earth had grown content and docile, easily manipulated by a united, but corrupt Solar Government. Captain Herlock, an interstellar outlaw who valued freedom above all else, vowed to fight the Solar Government's hold over mankind. His conflict with Earth's ruling body, however, would soon take a back seat to the threat of the ruthless Mazones, human-looking plant creatures ruled by fierce female warriors. They had visited Earth centuries before, and their leader Queen Raflesia now planned on making it her people's new home...after first disposing of its current inhabitants.

Refusing to let the planet he so loves fall to the invaders, Herlock and his brave pirate crew aboard the starship Arcadia manage to singlehandedly keep the Mazones at bay, finally challenging Raflesia in a personal duel. Emerging victorious, he forces the Mazones to seek new lodgings elsewhere. With the aliens defeated, and the Solar Government no longer in control, the 42-episode series concludes with the space pirate sailing off into the "sea of stars" as humanity is left to build a new—and hopefully better—world.



IT'S A LOCK It took Captain Herlock four hours, two lawyers and a pastrami sandwich before his name change became legal.

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SIX DEGREES OF CAPTAIN HERLOCK

HOW LEIJI MATSUMOTO'S MAIN MAN GETS AROUND THE "LEIJI-VERSE"



In a world where World War II battleships become mighty space cruisers, a guy with an eye-patch is likely to turn up anywhere. Welcome to the Leiji-verse, a shared universe where Matsumoto's creations exist—and nearly half of feature Captain Herlock, a Herlock ancestor, or a "Herlock-type."

The Cockpit: A manga about a German fighter pilot who flies against the backdrop of World War II. His future descendant? Captain Herlock! (unlicensed)

Space Battleship Yamato: In the manga, Captain Susumu Kodai's brother comes back from the dead. His new name? Captain Herlock! (unlicensed)

Galaxy Express 999: Little Tetsuro meets a cloak-clad stranger on his journey across the stars who saves his life. His identity? Captain Herlock! (Viz)

Queen Esmeraldas: Space pirate Esmeraldas struggles against the ruthless Arfress. Her husband's best friend? Captain Herlock! (ADV)

Gun Frontier: A gunslinger and his samurai friend travel the Old West in a parallel universe. His name? Captain Herlock! (Media Blasters) ■ BM

RETURN TO THE STARS

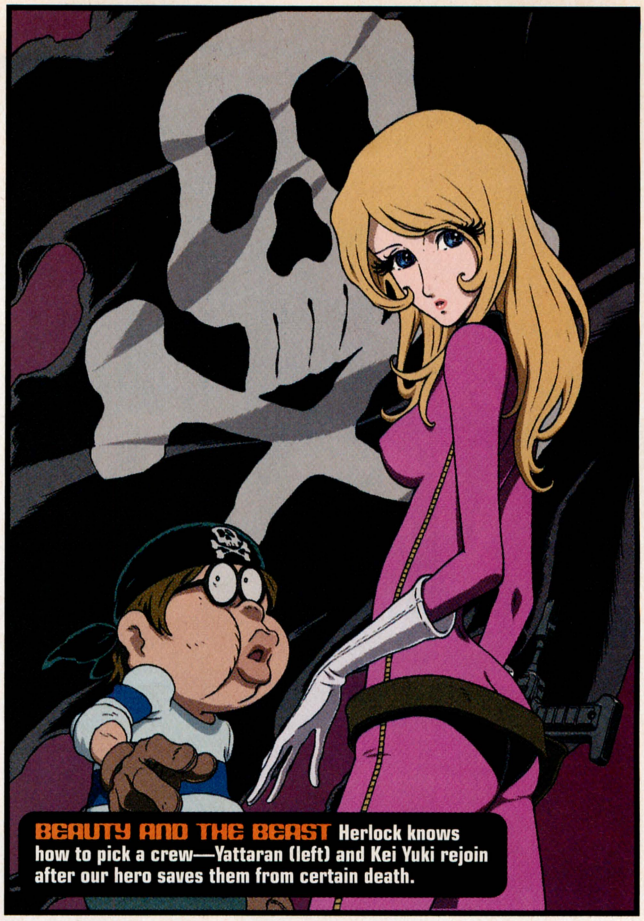
ANIME'S MOST FAMOUS SPACE PIRATE RETURNS TO THE SMALL SCREEN



Hungry for even more swashbuckling space action, Herlock fans? Well, hang on, 'cause even as you read this, the great space pirate is getting ready to set sail again for the U.S.!

Geneon Entertainment will be releasing the all-new *Captain Herlock, Space Pirate—The Legend Returns* on DVD here early this year. This four volume OVA is an updated version of Matsumoto's original Herlock storyline, though there are sure to be enough new twists and angles to keep the most familiar of Herlock fans enthralled. It's directed by Rintaro (*Metropolis*), who also helmed the original 1978 TV series, and features state-of-the-art animation by Studio Madhouse (*Ninja Scroll*).

Matsumoto himself reworked his classic for *The Legend Returns* and the screenplay is by Sadayuki Murai (*Cowboy Bebop*). The first volume, scheduled to be released February 3, will chronicle the meeting between Herlock and Tadashi Daiba, the young man who seeks to avenge his father's death and who eventually becomes a valued member of the cosmic corsair's crew. So hoist the skull-and-crossbones, and get ready to celebrate, space pirate-style! ■ BM



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Herlock knows how to pick a crew—Yattaran (left) and Kei Yuki rejoin after our hero saves them from certain death.

SAILING THE TV SEAS

Interestingly, *Space Pirate Captain Herlock* was seen in the U.S. in both the best and worst way. Its first American exposure came in 1979, when, fresh from its initial run in Japan, it was picked up for broadcast on UHF stations in the States. Those lucky enough to stumble across it were treated to *Space Pirate Captain Herlock* in its uncut original form, with English subtitles! Later, in the mid-eighties, Harmony Gold tried to repeat the success they had with *Robotech* (a combination of several different anime series) by splicing the original *Herlock* with another Matsumoto saga, *Queen of One Thousand Years,* which was actually Herlock-less. The result, called *Captain Harlock and the Queen of a Thousand Years*, was a confusing series that received little airplay and faded quickly.

There were no immediate sequels to *Space Pirate Captain Herlock*, but Matsumoto has kept his space pirate's legend alive. After appearances in the *Galaxy Express 999* TV show and the theatrical features based on it, Herlock hit the big screen in 1982's *My Youth in Arcadia*, which explored his origins. The following year, Herlock was back on TV in *Eternal Orbit SSX*, a series bridging the gap between *Arcadia* and the original *Herlock* show.

More recently, there have been the multi-volume OVAs *Cosmo Warrior Zero* and *Harlock Saga*. The latest OVA, *Captain Herlock, Space Pirate—The Legend Returns*, is slated for a U.S. DVD release from Geneon Entertainment (see sidebar). There will undoubtedly be more *Captain Herlock* adventures, as he's the creation Matsumoto feels the most affinity with. In the meantime, the space pirate's legions of loyal followers worldwide will keep the "Flag of Freedom" flying.

New Jersey-based freelance writer Bob Marshall proudly flies the "Flag of Free Beer."

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The 'Anime Insider' Preview of

Get Backers



Ginji and Ban are Charging Up For an American Manga Debut, But You Can Power Up Here First!

There's more than one way for manga fans to be shocked. Perhaps they can be taken aback by some saucy language, or perhaps their bodies can be blown to smithereens by thousands of volts of electricity! With *Get Backers*, it's your choice.

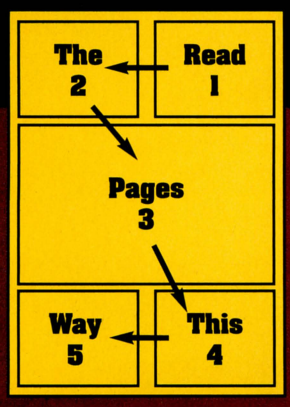
Writer Yuya Aoki and artist Rando Ayamine's Japanese manga and anime hit has been denied from American audiences for too long, and even though the 49-episode anime run isn't licensed, TOKYOPOP is bringing the manga tale of two broke yet super-powered kids to the U.S. beginning this February.

TOKYOPOP's famed 100% Authentic Manga style (digest sized and reading right-to-left, the Japanese way) will present the adventures of two young toughs, Ginji Amano and Ban Mido. They're literally "Get Backers," a team capable of getting back any lost or stolen item with a 100% success rate, though somehow their financial situations are never as good as their talents.

Starsky and Hutch, these detectives ain't—Ginji is able to conduct thousands of volts of electricity through his body to shock his foes, and Ban's infamous Evil Eye technique will trap any enemy within their worst nightmare! And their relationship is as volatile as their powers. "It runs along the love/hate axis, oscillating between these poles like lightning," explains Luis Reyes, editor of Get Backers. "Their mutual dedication to their chosen profession, no matter how badly they do it, binds them together through thick and thin."

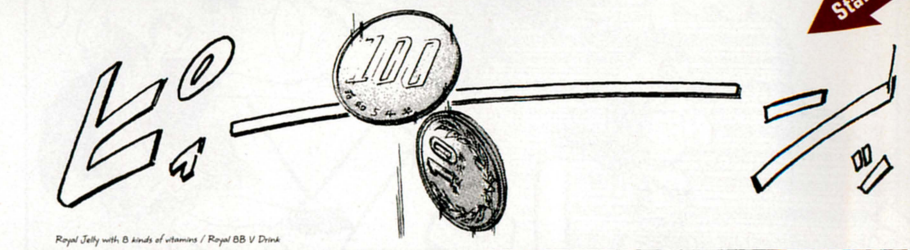
Much of the character's crass personalities are conveyed through dialogue and use of Japanese innuendo (see "In These Pages..." for more), so *Get Backers*' translation was particularly tricky. "We've attempted to hew as closely as possible to the Japanese," assures Luis. "We've adapted the dialects to bring out the intrinsically comedic elements in the dialogue. The book *is* dirty, though, in content and language." (The pages you read here have had the dirty talk toned down for your tender eyes, but the manga *will* be released in all its warning-labeled glory).

The first volume should be jolting newsstands nationwide on February 10th, with the second volume following on April 13. Now read on, and watch out for that static electricity! ■ **Rebecca Bundy**

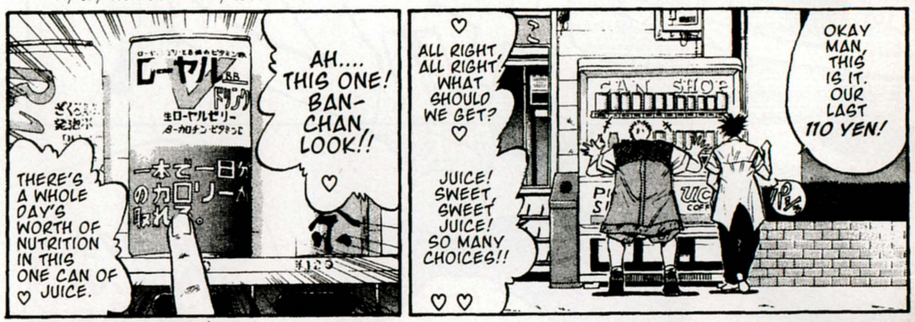


IN THESE PAGES...

Ginji and Ban are always scrounging for money since they just recover lost items, a career that isn't always in demand. In the following pages, you'll see how low these two will go to obtain the 10 yen (approximately 10¢) needed to keep them from starving. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the Japanese suffixes, you should know that guys referring to other guys with '-chan' is rarely done except by very young boys. It just goes to show you how childlike Ginji can be when he's not shaking down small children or vending machines with his electric powers!

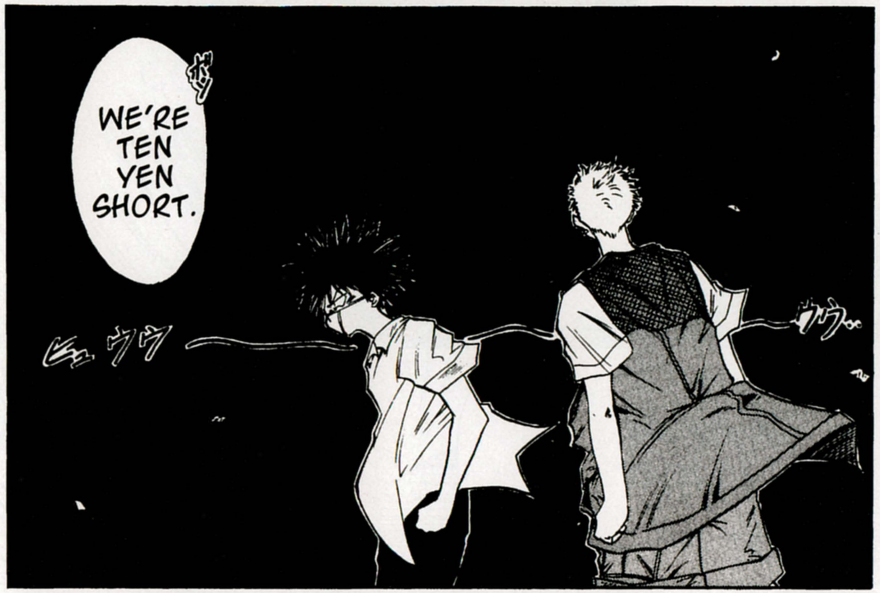


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Fresh Royal Jelly / Full day's worth of calories in one can. Beta Carotene, Vitamin C



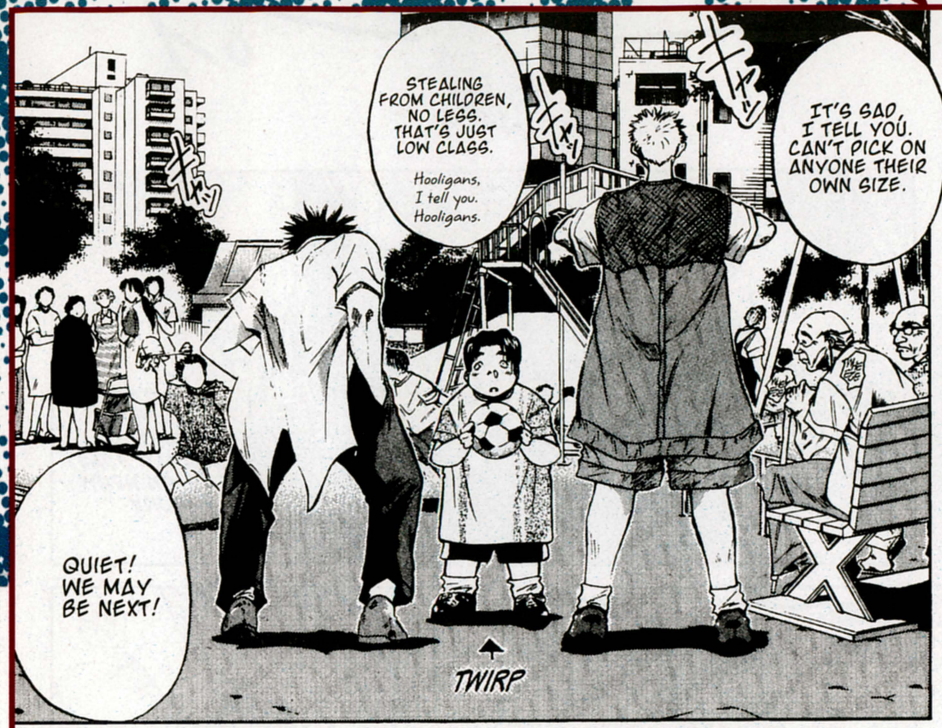




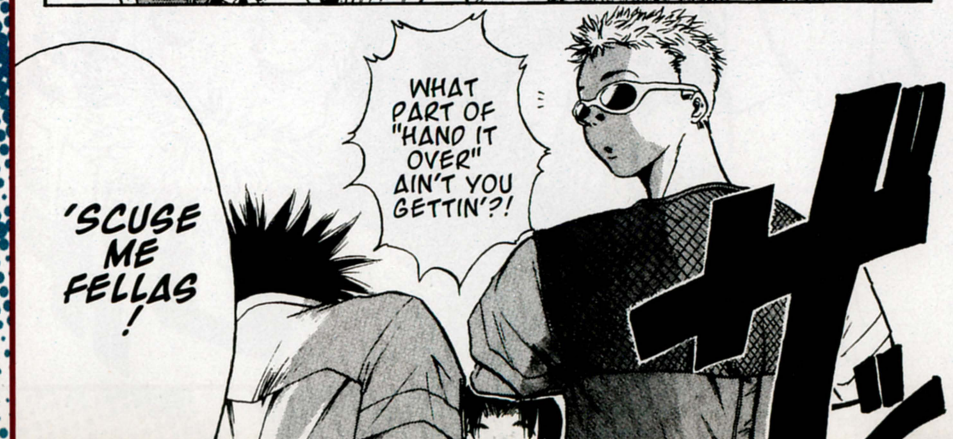



LISTEN, YOU LITTLE PUNK.
...TALK TO YOUR FOLKS...
...YOU SHOULD PROBA-BLY...
FOR A JOB LIKE THIS...
...OR ONE OF YOUR LITTLE FRIENDS.
WE'RE PROS. AS IN PROFESS-IONALS. GOT IT?
WE AIN'T CHEAP.
You trying to be cute, punk?!
QUIT IT!!!
YOU ARE, AREN'T YOU?


Cont'd He
I SAW YOUR SIGN. SO, YOU STEAL STUFF BACK, HUH?
TELL YOU WHAT... I'LL GIVE YA THIS TEN YEN IF YOU GET BACK MY FINAL FANTASY IX.


STEALING FROM CHILDREN, NO LESS. THAT'S JUST LOW CLASS.
Hooligans, I tell you. Hooligans.
IT'S SAD, I TELL YOU. CAN'T PICK ON ANYONE THEIR OWN SIZE.
QUIET! WE MAY BE NEXT!
TWIRP


WE HAVE OFFICIALLY HIT BOTTOM.
AND YOU! THIS ISN'T A STARING CONTEST!
OKAY... NOW I PITY MYSELF.
IT'S SHAMEFUL, I TELL YOU. SHAMEFUL.
WORLD'S JUST NOT RIGHT ANYMORE. WHERE'S THE SPORT IN PUSHING AROUND LITTLE KIDS, ANYWAY?
Grumble Grumble


'SCUSE ME FELLAS!
WHAT PART OF "HAND IT OVER" AIN'T YOU GETTIN'?!

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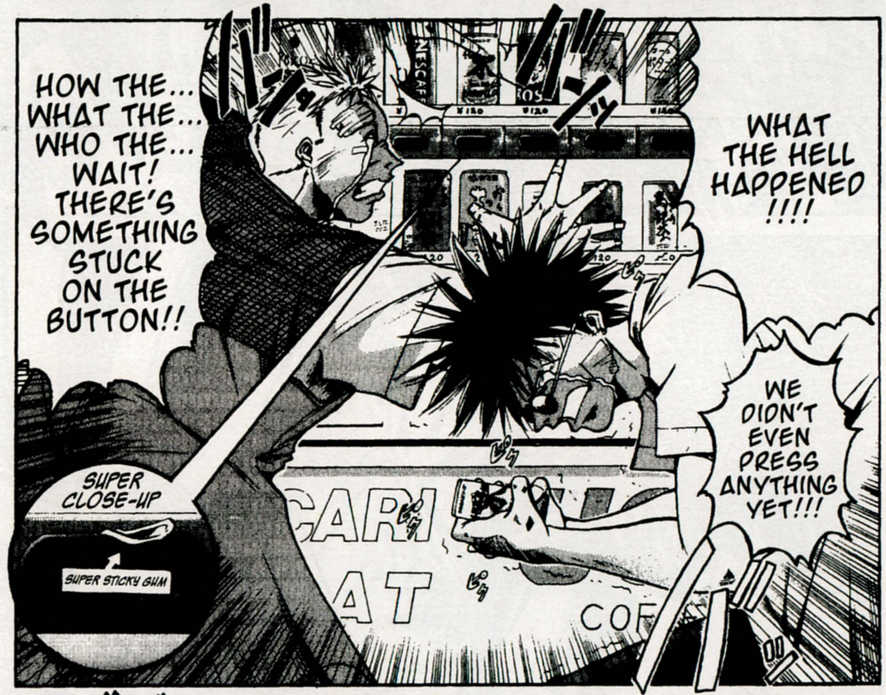

YO!! I AIN'T MESSIN' WITH YOU NO MORE, GOT IT, TWERP?!
HAND OVER FINAL FANTASY... OR I'LL... POP YOUR BALL!!


GASP
HUFF
GAG
COUGH
10 SHINY YEN, JUST ♡ FOR YOU.
BLING-BLING
POCARI SWEAT
UCC COFFEE
OKAY KID, WE GOT YOUR CRAP BACK FOR YOU.
OH, DOPE. THANKS. ♡ ♡
...AND I MEAN NEVER EVER...WORK THIS CHEAP AGAIN! COMPRENDE?!
OKAY...BUT YOU LISTEN, AND YOU LISTEN GOOD. WE WILL NEVER...
10

Cont'd Here


DO YA HAVE A PROBL'M ...
...WITH MY BROTHA ?
CRACK
CRACK
YEAH. HA HA.
NO SIR. JUST HAVIN' A CHAT.


……


HOW THE... WHAT THE... WHO THE... WAIT! THERE'S SOMETHING STUCK ON THE BUTTON!!
WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED !!!!
WE DIDN'T EVEN PRESS ANYTHING YET!!!
SUPER CLOSE-UP
SUPER STICKY GUM


HA HA HA HA HA HA HA!
!!?
ハッ

Cont'd Here


CANS SHOP
I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT WE WENT THROUGH FOR 10 STINKING YEN!!
DAMN IT MAN!
JUICE, BABY... SWEET, SWEET JUICE.
ゴクッ


ハアー

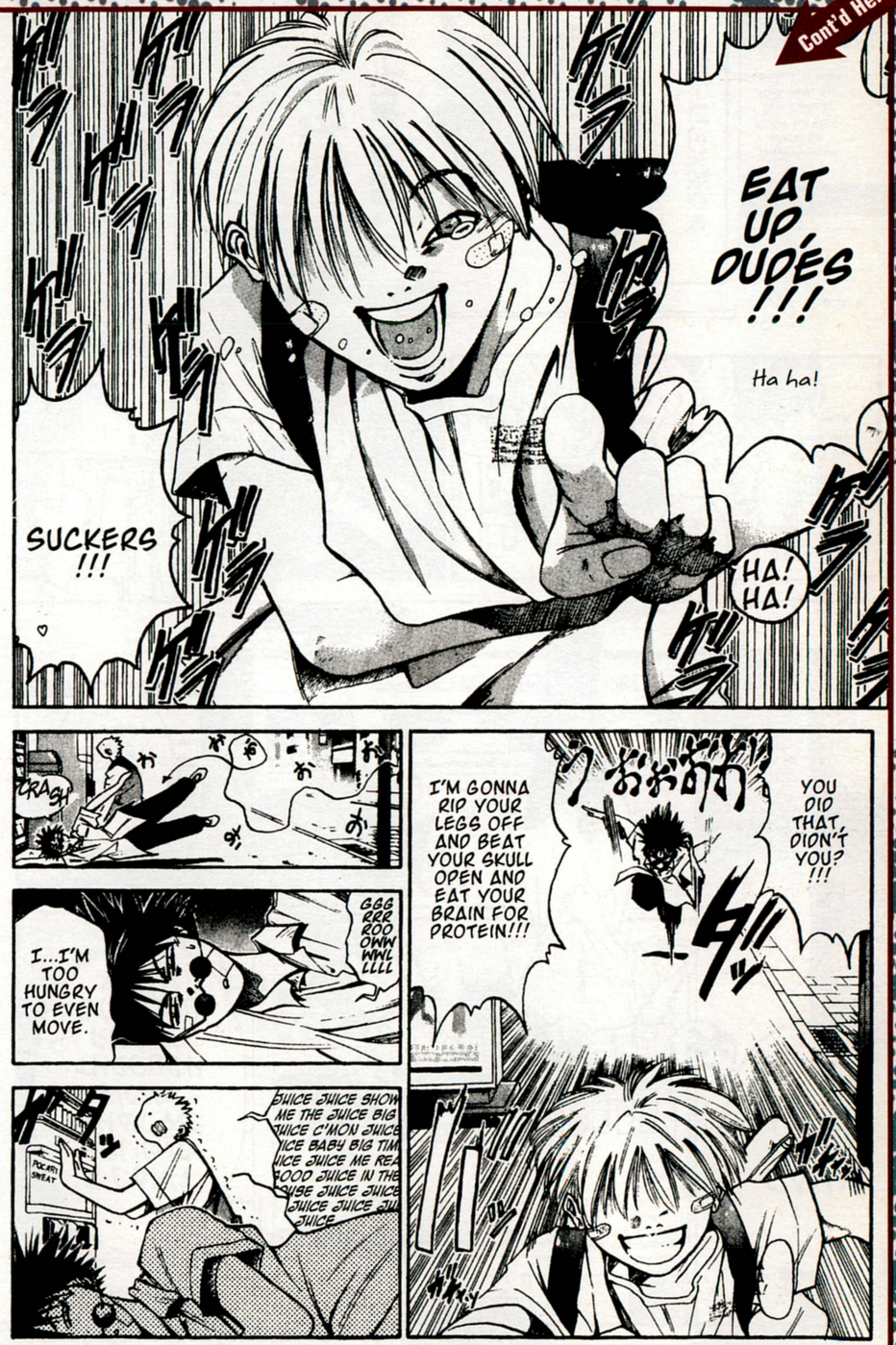

KEEP YOUR PANTS ON, BRO.
C'MON DUDE, THAT ONE RIGHT THERE! WITH THE FULL DAY'S WORTH OF VITAMINS!
What's the hold up?
CLANGITY CLANGITY CLANG


ふぅ…
東京名水ミリーズ
十数のおにいさんが
ぜったい 加工O
な・ワケない
150ml
Tokyo Famous Water Co. Nutin' but H2O Zero Calories Rich with the Goodness of Water



WANNA READ MORE? PICK UP *GET BACKERS* VOL.1 ON FEBRUARY 10TH!

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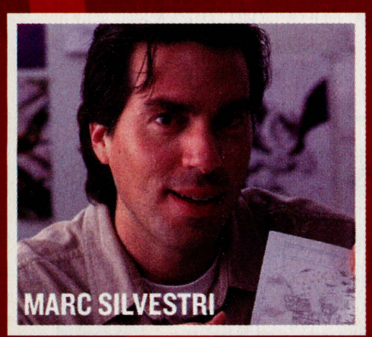
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Guest list subject to change. All Characters ™ & © 2003 their respective owners. All rights reserved. Additional fees may apply. Supplies may be limited and manufacturers may impose limits. Signings and panels maybe limited due to available space and signatures are not guaranteed.

GHIBLI TAKES FLIGHT

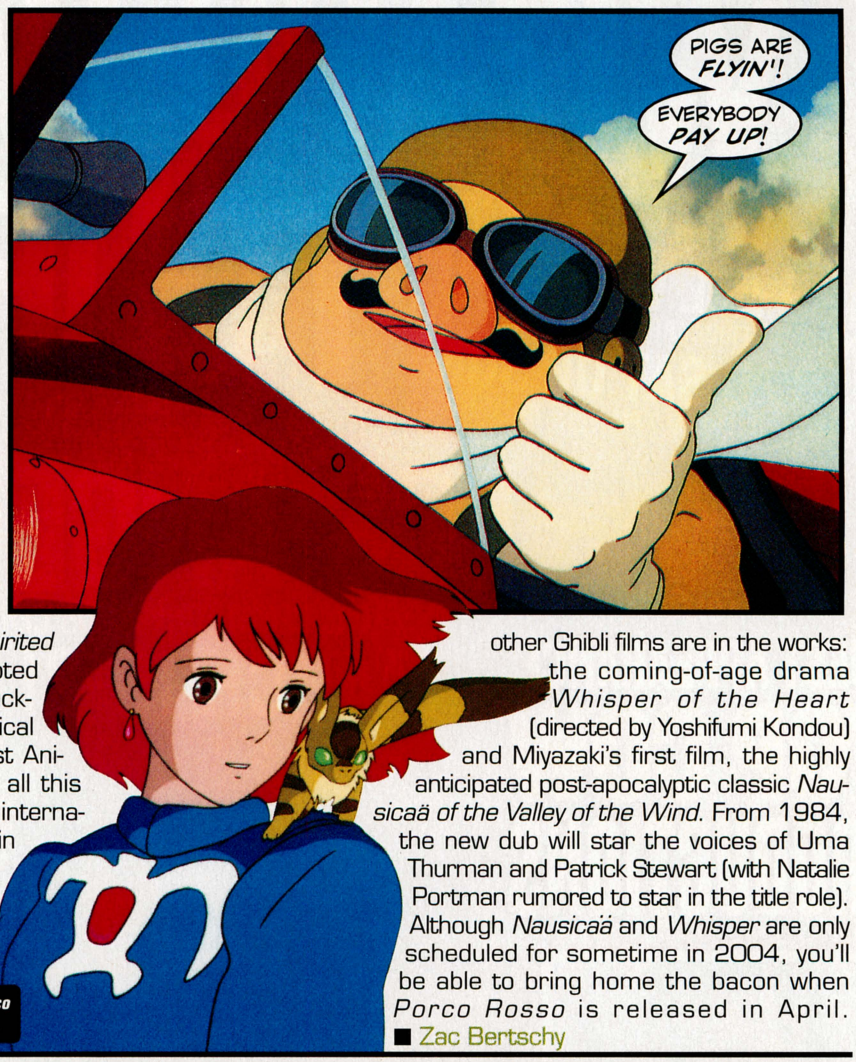
MIYAZAKI'S 'PORCO ROSSO' AND 'NAUSICAÄ' LIFT OFF IN 2004

If you want a new Hayao Miyazaki film on DVD, you'll have to wait until pigs fly. Don't worry, though—a pig will fly next spring in the form of *Porco Rosso*, Miyazaki's acclaimed 1992 theatrical anime feature.

Set in a pre-World War II Italy full of planes, *Porco Rosso*'s title character is a middle-aged bounty hunter (formerly named Marco Pagot) who finds himself so disgusted with humanity he turned into an anthropomorphic pig. In love with Gina, the thrice-widowed owner of the local nightclub, Porco has to stave off air pirates, a spunky girl mechanic and a smooth-talking American pilot who flies into town and proposes to Gina. Lacking the heavy themes of other Miyazaki films, *Porco Rosso* is a hilarious yet wistful romp.

Buena Vista has tapped Michael Keaton (*Batman*) to play the film's porcine protagonist, and Cary Elwes (*The Princess Bride*) is Curtis, the American flyboy who becomes Porco's rival for the hand of Susan Egan's (*Spirited Away*) Gina. The English adaptation was scripted by Cindy and Donald Hewitt, who received buckets of acclaim for their work on 2002's critical smash and Academy Award winner for Best Animated Feature *Spirited Away*. They'll need all this talent—the French dub of the film featured international film star Jean Reno (*The Professional*) in the title role, and Miyazaki has reportedly said the French dub was better than his original Japanese one!

Porco Rosso won't be flying solo. Two other Ghibli films are in the works: the coming-of-age drama *Whisper of the Heart* (directed by Yoshifumi Kondou) and Miyazaki's first film, the highly anticipated post-apocalyptic classic *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*. From 1984, the new dub will star the voices of Uma Thurman and Patrick Stewart (with Natalie Portman rumored to star in the title role). Although *Nausicaä* and *Whisper* are only scheduled for sometime in 2004, you'll be able to bring home the bacon when *Porco Rosso* is released in April. ■ Zac Bertschy



THE FRIENDLY SKIES Miyazaki masterpieces *Porco Rosco* (above) and *Nausicaä* should fly into your DVD collections in 2004.

FAST FORWARD

QUICK PEEKS AT THE NEXT BIG VIDEOS

PARTY ON *Comic Party Revolution*, a new OVA series that continues the overwhelmingly popular *Comic Party* anime TV series, is due out in two parts on DVD in Japan. Although Right Stuf has the original *Comic Party* anime, no one has announced the North American license to this new series.

QUADRUPLE THREAT Geneon announced a whopping four new anime titles for release in 2004. Gonzo's robot series *GadGuard*, the action-packed fighting show *Ikki Tousen* (whose manga will be released by TOKYOPOP by the name *Battle Vixens*), Japan's most popular boxing saga *Hajime no Ippo* and supernatural horror series *Demon Lord Dante* all made the cut.

DEADLY DATE Viz has finally announced the license for *Saikano* (a.k.a. *She The Ultimate Weapon*), a wildly popular series about a high school girl who becomes the Japanese government's arsenal during wartime, and the boy who loves her. The heart-breaking anime series is due out in April 2004, followed by the first volume of the gut-wrenching manga in June. ■ ZB



MINMEI GROWS UP

SEE THE ROBOTECH THAT WASN'T ALLOWED ON TV

In 2003, *Robotech* turned 18 years old; in 2004, it'll grow up. ADV Films has announced they'll be re-releasing the cult anime favorite *Robotech*, with uncensored footage never seen during its original '80s TV broadcast. The epic space saga will be visually restored, and the sound will be re-mastered in Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround Sound, meaning *Robotech* will sound and look better than even its 1985 premiere.

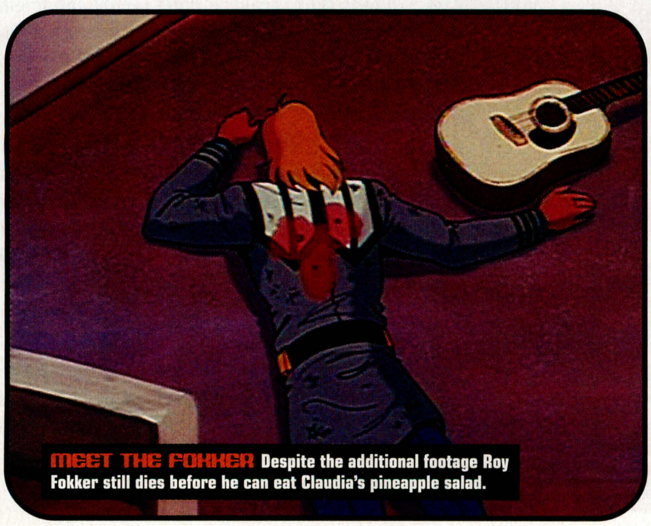
But *Robotech* fans will be most excited by the one-to-two minutes of footage added back in to each and every episode. "This is all original material from the 1980s," revealed *Robotech* licensor Harmony Gold's Steve Yun. "We went back to the original masters, where things had to be cut for content and running time." Among more fleshed out scenes, the additional footage will include shots of future pop diva Lynn Minmei in the shower in episode four.



MINMEI'S BACK And concidentally, that's what you get to see in the remastered *Robotech*.

Culled together by merging and rewriting three original anime (*Super Dimensional Fortress Macross, Super Dimensional Cavalry Southern Cross* and *Genesis Climber Mospeada*), *Robotech* is the story of an alien space fortress that crash-lands on earth. The humans have to fight their way across space against hordes of Zentraedi, the alien beings who want it back, their masters and a few other species who seek the power of the ship and the Robotechnology it holds.

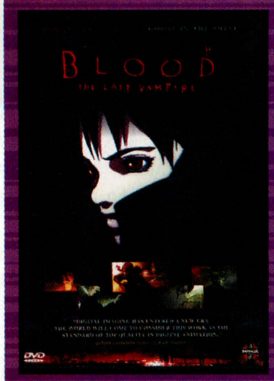
"We're totally excited about this," enthused Yun. "ADV had recently upgraded their facilities and it looked like a good time to redo *Robotech*." All three parts of the *Robotech* saga will be released in this special edition format in seven 12-episode DVD sets, with the first one on sale January 27. ■ ZB



MEET THE FOKKER Despite the additional footage Roy Fokker still dies before he can eat Claudia's pineapple salad.

EASTERN EGGS

HIDDEN SECRETS ON YOUR FAVORITE DVDS



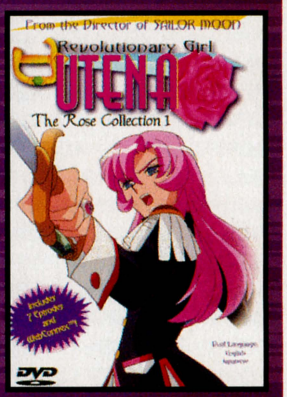
BLOOD: THE LAST VAMPIRE
If your computer has a DVD-ROM installed, insert the *Blood* disc and open up your file browser. If you search the contents of the DVD without playing the movie, you'll find a load of cool stuff, like desktop wallpapers and a Saya-flavored screensaver.



NOIR VOL. 4
In part two of episode 15, press "up" ten times in a row right when Shaoli uses her fingernail to kill her foe. You'll be treated to a new commentary by three of the show's principal voice actresses and the dub's writer, Matt Greenfield.



OTAKU NO VIDEO
Highlight the Images section and press enter. Then, instead of hitting Menu press Title on your DVD remote control. A special message from Kubo's tennis partner is your reward!



REVOLUTIONARY GIRL UTENA VOL.1
Select episode 7, "Jury Unfullfilled," from the Scene Select screen, and play the opening. Make sure to turn the English voice track on, and you'll hear a special instrumental version of the opening theme in place of the usual song.



TRIGUN VOL. 8
Go to the Chapter Select menu and highlight episode 25. Highlight the preview chapter for episode 26 and press Enter. The text will change to read "Cat Found!" and you'll see some early concept art for Kuroneko, the show's mascot.
■ ZB

ON THE SHELF

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR ANIME STORES THIS WINTER?

JANUARY

12 KINGDOMS VOL. 4
The situation is desperate for Youko, who remains alongside her only remaining friend, Rakushun. Sugimoto's vicious hunt for her former friend continues, and the world of the 12 countries gets a lot more dangerous. (Media Blasters, DVD, $29.98)

ANGELIC LAYER VOL. 3
Even though Misaki began fighting in the Angelic Layer tournaments a short while ago, she's already fighting the country's top combatants. Can she keep up with the increasingly rough competition? (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

BOYS OVER FLOWERS VOL. 3
Post-makeover, Tsukushi was the smash of Tsukasa's yacht party, but the seeds of romance have been planted and now the preening pretty boy is after our heroine. Tsukishi thought her ideal partner was Rui, but things are a little more complicated now. (Viz, DVD, $24.98)

BRIGADOON VOL. 5
The Brigadoon assembly has been overthrown by Variable after 4th-Gun Swordsman Monomakia shows up and destroys everything. (TOKYOPOP, DVD, $29.98)

CAPTAIN HERLOCK: THE LEGEND VOL. 1
Tadashi was your average wasteland-dwelling punk when four zombies killed his father. Captain Herlock, the last of the space pirates, shows up in the nick of time and invites him on the adventure of a lifetime. (Geneon, DVD, $29.98)

CHOBITS VOL. 6
Minoru delves deeper into the secrets behind the Chobits Persocom series, and Chi's connection to them. What he discovers changes Chi's life forever, and puzzles Hideki to no end! (Geneon, DVD, $29.98)

CRYING FREEMAN COMPLETE COLLECTION
All the action, intrigue and violence of the *Crying Freeman* OVA saga in one complete box set. Yo Hinomura has been brainwashed into a merciless killing machine for the 108 Dragons crime syndicate. (ADV, DVD, $59.98)



JEWEL OF HER EYE
Brigadoon's Marin is targeted—but is she just too cute to die?

CYBERNETICS GUARDIAN
The Central Guard Company is hired to wash the crime out of the City of Tomorrow's slums, with brute force. Two scientists enter the fray with competing technology, although their individual motives are shrouded in mystery. (CPM, DVD, $14.98)

DRAGON BALL Z: CELL GAMES
In only nine days, Cell's tournament is going to begin. Vegeta, Piccolo and Trunks head for the Hyperbolic Time Chamber, but Goku and Gohan stay behind, opting out of training for what could be the fight of their lives! (FUNimation, DVD, $19.98)

FIGURE 17 VOL. 3
Tsubasa and her clone sister Hikaru have a pretty tough life taking down the marauding aliens that threaten their family and friends. The stakes are higher than ever this time, with a new evil threatening Earth. (Media Blasters, DVD, $29.98)

FINAL FANTASY UNLIMITED VOL. 3
After meeting eccentric scientist Cid, Ai and Yu must continue their dangerous quest through Wonderland to rescue their parents. Kaze's past memories continue to haunt him, in and out of battle. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

FULL METAL PANIC VOL. 6
The penultimate volume of ADV's smash hit mecha show! The tension between Sosuke and Kaname heats up, while new enemies are revealed and the agents of Mithril are put to the test. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

HOT PICK

THE BIG O II VOL. 1
January 20th on DVD, $24.98, Bandai Entertainment



If you want three great reasons to see *The Big O II*, we've got 'em. One—it finally continues the cliffhanger ending from the last episodes of season 1, which we've been waiting for since 2001. Two—it's one of the first anime sequels produced for America, as Cartoon Network and Bandai Entertainment pooled their resources to make more of the anime hit. Three—*The Big O* rocks. Take a mystery straight out of *X-Files* and *Dark City*, and pack in as much giant robot action as you can in a half-hour time frame, and that's each episode of *The Big O*. This sequel series begins to answer the questions left brutally unanswered by the first series, like why did the people of Paradigm City lose their memory 40 years ago? Where do the Big O and all the other Megadeus robots come from? And why can Roger pilot it? If that wasn't enough for Roger and the Big O, a whole new list of problems plagues the pair this time around, including a freshly-minted villain by the name of Alan Gabriel whose questionable fashion sense and diabolical schemes terrorize Paradigm City. You can expect bigger Megadeus robots, bigger battles, incredible animation and a whole host of new secrets revealed in the second season of *The Big O*. ■ ZB

GARAGA
The starship Xebec has a serious problem: an explosion sent the ship hurtling towards a hostile planet, rife with evil dinosaurs bent on eating the crew alive! Can the daughter of the Space Federation's Vice-Admiral make it out alive? (CPM, DVD, $14.98)

GRAPPLER BAKI
Baki Hanma is a karate genius, the kind of fighter who knows every move, every opponent, and every outcome. Nobody can bring him down. Now, he's in the Shinshinaki private fighting tournament, and all bets are off. (CPM, DVD, $14.98)

HARMAGEDDON COLLECTOR'S SERIES
Princess Luna, the most powerful psychic on the planet, must lead a team of Earth's most powerful psychics against an invading team of disgusting aliens! A classic produced by Rintaro (*Metropolis*) and Katsuhiro Otomo (*Akira*). (CPM, DVD, $14.98)

I'M GONNA BE AN ANGEL! VOL. 2
The second volume is finally here! The incredibly bizarre adventures of wanna-be angel Noelle and her monstrous family continue and Yuusuke is certainly in over his head. (Synch-Point, DVD, $29.98)

JUDGE
When the innocent dead need representation against the crimes of the living, the Judge of Darkness is there to settle their claims. He stands as testimony before the Ten Kings of Hell—but he doesn't do *pro bono* work. (CPM, DVD, $14.98)

KNIGHTS OF THE ZODIAC VOL. 1
The edited-for-television version of *Saint Seiya*. Follow the adventures of the powerful and impressive Zodiac Knights as they fight for truth and justice, this time without all the violence. (ADV, DVD, $19.98)

L/R VOL. 2
Rowe and Jack are in a bit of a tight spot this time around. They have to rely on Jack's ex-girlfriend to help defend Ishtar's biggest corporation from a terrorist known only as Angel. (Geneon, DVD, $29.98)

LUPIN III TV VOL.5
Lupin, Fujiko, Jigen and Goemon single-handedly escape an escape-proof prison, match wits with a genius, compete with other infamous robbers in an international competition and outsmart Inspector Zenigata! (Geneon, DVD, $24.98)

MACROSS PLUS BOX SET
One of the most respected series of all time, this box set collects both the four-volume OVA series and the condensed movie version. Isamu Dyson is an ace pilot, his longtime rival Guld Bowman is working on a competing project, and the competition hits the boiling point when an old flame reappears in both of their lives. (Manga Entertainment, DVD, $89.98)

MAGICAL SHOPPING ARCADE ABENOBASHI VOL. 2
Sasshi and Arumi's bizarre odyssey through alternate dimensions continues. They hop from Abenobashi to Abenobashi, desperately scrambling to find their way home through a cast of crazy characters and mishaps. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

NUKU NUKU DASH VOL. 3
The insane continued adventures of the all-purpose cultural cat girl Nuku Nuku and her caretaker, Ryunosuke. The comedy hits a fever pitch in this smash hit OVA sequel! (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

ORPHEN II VOL. 1
See the humble origins of Orphen, one of the world's most powerful sorcerers, as he struggles his way through magic school. His experiences shape the man he becomes and starts age-old bitter rivalries. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

PATLABOR TV VOL. 7
The Section 2 folks are back and better than ever before, bumbling their way through a series of rescue missions that somehow always end in their favor, despite all the odds. (CPM, DVD, $29.98)



ADDED BENEFITS One of the most acclaimed series of all time, the *Macross Plus* box set is loaded with extras.

PRETEAR VOL. 2
Himeo's heroic struggle against the Princess of Disaster heats up. The Princess' demonic minions continue to suck the Leafe out of the planet's life force, and it's up to Himeno and her guardians to stop them. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

HOT PICK

HEAT GUY J VOL. 4
February 3rd on DVD, $29.98, Geneon Entertainment

If you haven't been watching *Heat Guy J*, we feel sorry for you. You're missing out on one of the most entertaining, well-written and best-dubbed series on the market, and it's finally coming to a conclusion. Clair Leonelli, the psychotic head 'Vampire' of the Leonelli mafia family, has had it in for android detective J and his partner Daisuke ever since they put the kibosh on his evil schemes. Distracting the dynamic duo with a roaring blaze, Clair sends in a skilled team of android-killing mercenaries to dismantle J; then, a couple of princes visiting from a foreign land that has abandoned the concept of technology stir the pot, creating chaos wherever they go. City Safety Management specialists Shun and Kyoko move in to stop them, but it's a world of trouble only J and Dice can handle. Fortunately, J and Dice are Judoh's toughest detectives, and it's going to take much more then the Leonelli family's firepower to bring them or J's trademark fedora down. The story's so well crafted that you don't *need* to see the first DVDs to enjoy this volume, so go pick it up—but it wouldn't hurt to pick up all four anyway. ■ ZB



THE *HEAT* IS ON Only science can make muttonchops as sleek as the ones J wears.



RG VEDA
CLAMP's first animated series ever! Swords and sorcery are the order of the day in this wildly popular fantasy OVA series, where six brave warriors must bring down the evil general Taishahuken. (CPM, DVD, $14.98)

RUNE SOLDIER VOL. 6
The final volume of *Rune Soldier*! The crazy adventures of Louie and his band of shapely female adventurers come to a no-holds-barred finish, with Louie realizing his true potential, and the value of real friendship. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

SAINT SEIYA VOL. 4
Seiya's endless quest for a higher rank in the cosmos of the universe gets a little harder this time, with tougher and tougher opponents entering the galactic ring. It's an all-out brawl for total supremacy! (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

SAIYUKI VOL. 7
Sanzo's hard-hitting team of holy warriors continue their journey to the west to defeat the resurrected lord of the Youma. Their quest drives ever closer to their goal, but the demons in their way are much stronger. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

SAMURAI X OVA COLLECTION
The complete *Rurouni Kenshin* OVA series in one handy box. See Kenshin's bloody past as the Battousai and his poignant end in six hours of Meiji-era action, as well as the future of Kaoru and their son, Kenji. (ADV, DVD, $69.98)

S-CRY-ED VOL. 4
Now that the portal to the Other Side has opened as a result of a cataclysmic battle between Kazuma and Ryuho, everything has changed. Kazuma's fight against the forces of HOLD for the fate of the Lost Ground rages on. (Bandai, DVD, $29.98)

SLAYERS GREAT
The third *Slayers* motion picture sees Lina and Naga fighting it out in gigantic super-deformed golems of themselves! Witness high sorcery and high comedy in this fan-favorite motion picture event. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

SOMEDAY'S DREAMERS VOL. 2
Yume is a magic user with a license in Japan, where sorcery is controlled by the government. She also happens to be substantially more powerful than her fellow government agents; can the agency keep her under control? (Geneon, DVD, $29.98)



CRY FOR HIM *S-Cry-ed*'s Straight Cougar shows Mimori his battle pose.

STEAM DETECTIVES VOL. 2
Naratuki, an orphan detective, must battle wits and skills against Steam City's most vile and reprehensible criminals, all of whom will stop at nothing to bring the powerful metropolis to its knees. (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

SUPER GALS! VOL. 4
The continued misadventures of Kotobuki Ran and her gang of teeny-boppers. The streets of Shibuya will be kept safe by Ran's impeccable sense of justice and fashion! (ADV, DVD, $29.98)

THEY WERE ELEVEN
The feature-length adaptation of the classic manga, *They Were Eleven* finally comes home on DVD. Eleven students are trapped in a derelict spaceship for 53 days as part of a rigorous final test. (CPM, DVD, $19.98)

VOLTAGE FIGHTER GOWCAIZER
Hellstinger and the legendary armored fighter Gowcaizer must band together in order to defeat a common enemy, the vicious and cruel Ozaki and his demonic minions. (CPM, DVD, 19.98)

YU-GI-OH! VOL. 17 & 18
A game historian reveals to Yugi that three legendary monsters once brought Earth to its knees, and now Marik and his Rare Hunters are after them! Can Yugi stop their evil scheme before it's too late? (FUNimation, DVD, 14.98)

YU YU HAKUSHO VOL. 20
A plan is hatched to open a tunnel between the Demon world and the world of the Living! As normal humans are mysteriously given supernatural powers, it's up to Kurama, Kuwabara and Hiei to rescue Yusuke. (FUNimation, DVD, $24.98)

HOT PICK

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION DIRECTOR'S CUT: RESURRECTION

January 16th on DVD, $29.98, ADV Films

Just when you thought you'd finally figured out the end of the groundbreaking smash hit TV series *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, along comes ADV with shocking new footage that changes *everything*. Meant to replace volume 7 of ADV's original *Evangelion* TV series DVDs, *Resurrection* will still contain the original broadcast version of episodes 21-23, wherein Shinji gives up, the Lance of Longinus must be used, and Asuka comes under attack by the 16th Angel. But *Resurrection* will also contain the brand-new director's cuts, complete with extra footage that reveals many of the show's mysteries, meticulously overseen by director Hideaki Anno himself! If you think you've seen everything Anno had up his sleeve, think again. This special edition DVD also includes new extras that hardcore *Evangelion* fans won't want to miss, namely an all-new 25-minute interview with Richard Taylor, the co-founder and head of creatures and effects at Weta Workshop. Taylor spills the beans on the highly anticipated upcoming *Neon Genesis Evangelion* theatrical film; you'll see production stills, concept art and pre-release movie images that are exclusive to this DVD! *Evangelion* fans unite: you can't live without this! ■ ZB



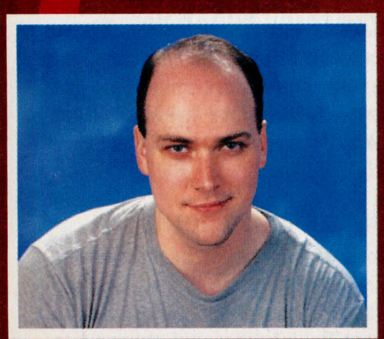
PREACHING TO THE CHOIR Is there really any need for us to explain why you should buy more *Evangelion*? Didn't think so.

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FEBRUARY

BLACK JACK VOL. 1
One of Osamu Tezuka's most popular and famous series comes to DVD. BlackJack is the world's greatest doctor, working for free on only the toughest medical cases. (CPM, DVD, $19.98)

DRAGON BALL GT VOL. 11 & 12
Time starts to run out for Vegeta, who is struggling to rescue Goku from the fearsome grip of HFIL. Meanwhile, Super 17 continues his endless rampage against the denizens of earth. (FUNimation, DVD, 19.98)

INFINITE RYVIUS VOL. 3
Tensions rise as a celebration aboard the Ryvius is cut short by an incoming dispatch: the crew of the Ryvius is under arrest for acts of terrorism against the now-destroyed Liebe Delta and Mars Fleet! (Bandai, DVD, $29.98)

INITIAL D VOL. 3
Iggy really puts his foot in it when he accepts a challenge from Zach of the Night Kids on Tak's behalf! Will Tak make it to the race in time? (TOKYOPOP, DVD, $19.98)

KIDDY GRADE VOL. 1
Keeping the galaxy's scum was never an easy job, but it's up to special agents Lumière and Éclair to bring them in. Beautiful and powerful, these two keep the peace when chaos threatens to rule supreme. (FUNimation, DVD, $24.98)

KIKAIDER VOL. 4
Saburo's maniacal whistles infect Jiro's brain, causing his circuits to go haywire and leading to an unfortunate attack on Mistuko. Love comes through in the end, and Jiro turns the tables on the evil Saburo. (Bandai, DVD, $24.98)

LAST EXILE VOL. 2
Claus and Lavie's future is thrust into doubt when they enter the swirling eye of the storm of war. The future of both nations rests in their inexperienced hands; are they up to the task? (Geneon, DVD, $29.98)

LEGEND OF THE DRAGON KINGS VOL. 5
Lady L, a fearsome special agent who was horribly disfigured in a battle with a fierce dragon, has kidnapped Owaru, who promptly transforms into a wind dragon. It's up to his family to save him! (CPM, DVD, $19.99)

NINJA SCROLL TV VOL. 2
Jubei's endless quest against the demonic hordes ravaging the Japanese countryside continues. Now that the beautiful and talented Shigure's village has been destroyed, she's on a mission for vengeance. (Urban Vision, DVD, $29.98)



GAME OVER Although the Dark Tournament has ended, the *Yu Yu Hakusho* crew's problems are just beginning.

SD GUNDAM FORCE VOL. 1 & 2
The nefarious Dark Axis has invaded the peace-loving Neotopia, and it's up to the underground rebel brigade Gundam Force to take them out! Lead by the heroic young Shute, the Gundam Force must struggle to keep the peace. (Bandai, DVD, $19.98)

TINY SNOW FAIRY SUGAR VOL. 6
Sugar relentlessly attempts to help Saga, but only causes her more frustration. Salt and Pepper have finally found their Twinkles and are headed back to the world of Faeries! Can Sugar find hers? (Geneon, DVD, $29.98)

WITCH HUNTER ROBIN VOL. 3
Investigating a recent murder, Robin stumbles across a creepy old woman in a wheelchair claiming to be an ancient witch! The secrets she reveals about Robin's past will change her future forever. (Bandai, DVD, $29.98)

YU YU HAKUSHO VOL. 21
Yuusuke, Kurama, Kuwabara and Hiei have their hands full with Sayoko's latest nightmare, and the tunnel between the demon and living worlds continues to threaten the peace and sanctity of Earth. (FUNimation, DVD, $24.98)

YUKIKAZE VOL. 1
A renegade pilot, who commands the advanced fighter jet Yukikaze, goes head to head with an alien, and is saved at the last minute by the AI system in his plane! Both double-disc sets include the soundtrack. (Bandai, DVD, $29.98 or $39.98 special edition)

HOT PICK

KIMAGURE ORANGE ROAD OVA & MOVIE BOX SET
January 20th on DVD, $74.95, AnimEigo



Almost universally worshipped for its stunning character design, heart-wrenching plot, raw dramatic power and side-splitting comedy, *Kimagure Orange Road* is one of the most highly acclaimed romantic comedies ever produced. The story of telepathic milquetoast Kyosuke and his love triangle with the ever-cheerful Hikaru and the cool, collected Madoka has thrilled anime fans for over a generation. This final boxed set contains the 4-episode OVA series and the devastating final movie, "I Want to Return to that Day." Thankfully, the OVA episodes are mostly light-hearted comedy, as Kyosuke swaps souls with a goldfish, a rock star, and even his pet cat, Jingoro; and a Hawaiian vacation turns sour for Kyosuke and the girls when Hikaru is kidnapped, and it's up to Kyosuke and Madoka to rescue her. The centerpiece of this set is the feature film, which concludes the *Kimagure Orange Road* storyline with a heart-shattering finale. The love triangle is finally forced apart, and Kyosuke must choose between Hikaru, whose love for him is unwavering, and Madoka, with whom he's been in love since he first laid eyes on her. The final moments of this film have brought tears to many fans' eyes, and it's sure to send you running for the tissue box as well. ■ ZB

THE COOLEST EXCLUSIVES IN THE UNIVERSE



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STARS AND STRIKES

WANT A NEW KIND OF EPIC SPACE TRILOGY? TOKYOPOP'S GOT IT ALL

If your dad rules the world, life is good. But what's a boy to do if the world is invaded by aliens demanding your surrender? TOKYOPOP has the answer to these questions, and many more, when they release three manga titles starting this year under the name *The Seikai Trilogy. Crest of the Stars, Banner of the Stars and Banner of the Stars II.*

The Seikai Trilogy is the story of a boy named Jinto whose father surrendered control of the Martine planet to the Humankind Abh Empire. Once controlled by the Abh, Jinto is sent away for schooling as an Abh nobleman. Fast forward seven years, and Jinto, now 17, is ready to take his place in the Abh military structure—and face the new regime for the very first time.

This manga series by Aya Yoshinaga (*Escaflowne: The Movie*) and Toshihiro Ono (*Pokémon*) also has been made into a popular anime series released by Bandai and currently airing on TechTV. But the space opera truly began in 1996 as a series of sci-fi novels by Hiroyuki Morioka.

Jason Alnas, marketing manager at TOKYOPOP, believes that this series will be a hit. "*The Seikai Trilogy* is a tremendously successful anime series with a large fan following. That was obviously appealing to us in deciding to publish the manga," he said.

English script adaptor, Dan Borses, notes that this series is unlike any other sci-fi series. "For one, it's far more character-based than most titles and its refreshingly free of mecha," he explained. "Jinto is the son of a collaborator. How often do you have likable protagonists who belong to a conquering species?"

Presented in its 100% Authentic Manga format, the story is contained in each of three volumes, one for each series. *The Seikai Trilogy: Crest of the Stars* will be out this June, with the others to follow on a bimonthly schedule through the rest of 2004.

■ Jennifer M. Contino



RIDING THE CREST Abh princess Latiel (top), Jinto and Naru can't wait to see their new manga.

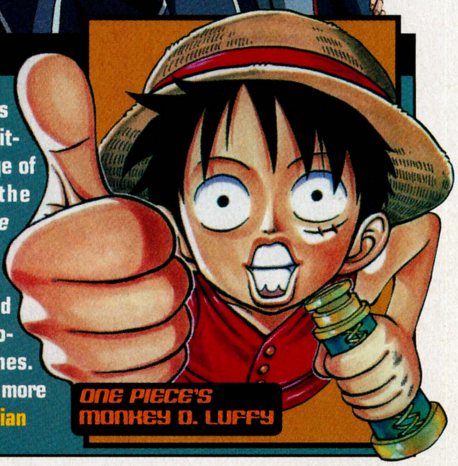
QUICK READS

PAGE TURNIN' NEWS CLIPS

COPY RIGHTS **Another blow has been struck in favor of manga-ka in Japan as The Committee to Protect the Manga Scripts recovered over 21,000 pages of manga originally held by defunct publisher Sakura Publishing. The committee was formed in October 2003 after it was discovered that original first-draft pages from manga-ka published by Sakura were being sold off at various stores in Japan.**

CLAMP-MANIA STRIKES AGAIN **The ladies of CLAMP continue their rampage through the TOKYOPOP catalog, as TOKYOPOP has confirmed the acquisition of five more titles by the über-quartet: *Legal Drug, Suki, The Legend of Chun Hyang, The One I Love* and *RG Veda*, their first professional work. The first of these, *Suki*, will be released in February.**

'ONE PIECE' OFF **Fans who noticed something a little funny with the last page of the second volume of the *Shonen Jump* manga *One Piece* need not despair. Viz is reprinting the incorrectly printed volume and offering a replacement program for the defective ones. Check out www.viz.com for more details. ■ Trisha L. Sebastian**



ONE PIECE'S MONKEY D. LUFFY

INVID ATTACK

ROBOTECH'S NEW GENERATION WAR IS ON DC COMICS

When *Robotech* is mentioned, nine times out of 10 it's the *Macross* Saga. Now DC Comics, through their imprint Wildstorm, aim to bring a bit of attention to the *New Generation*.

Robotech: Invasion tells the tale of Lance Belmont, a.k.a. fan-favorite Lancer (and a.k.a. Yellow Dancer, his female pop star disguise), in the opening chapters of Earth's war with the Invid in 2038.

While the art team is led by Takeshi Miyazawa and UDON Studios, the real draw will be two covers by the original *Macross* character designer Yoshitaka Amano. As an extra bonus, each issue will feature a chapter of a short story starring Karl Riber, Lisa Hayes' fiancée, and *Mars* base, set before the *Macross* saga.

The first issue of the monthly *Robotech: Invasion* five-part miniseries is due in January.

■ Stacy L. Hausl



IF IT WERE MANGA...

DR. SEUSS' THE CAT IN THE HAT



HAT TRICK Let's get this straight. A giant talking cat and his two magical "things" turn a house into an upside-down fantasy-land for two wide-eyed children? While arguing with the kids' stuck-up fish? Dr. Seuss' tale sounds like manga to us.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE

ALIEN 9: THE MANGA VS. THE ANIME

Aliens are invading Earth, and only sixth graders can stop the infestation! Armed with rollerblades and symbiotic alien helmets called Borgs, Yuri, Kumi, and Kasumi protect their school from freaky and gross alien attacks. Central Park Media loved the story so much, they released both the anime and the manga—now in a handy box set. However, the anime only covers just a part of the story...

CREEPY CRAWLIES

While the anime accentuates the feelings of loneliness and powerlessness that the three girls experience, the manga truly reveals how gross and creepy it is to have an alien survive off your body, in exchange for its protection, complete with extra slime and crying.

GIRLS GONE ALIEN

In the anime, something happens to change cheerful Kasumi but it's never really clear what happens after she is absorbed by a Yellow Knife alien. The manga explains that she fuses with it to become a hybrid.

DEAD OR ALIVE

The anime ends with Kumi's body bloodied and lifeless, yet this is not the real end of this serious student. In the manga, Kumi returns to life, but at a serious price.

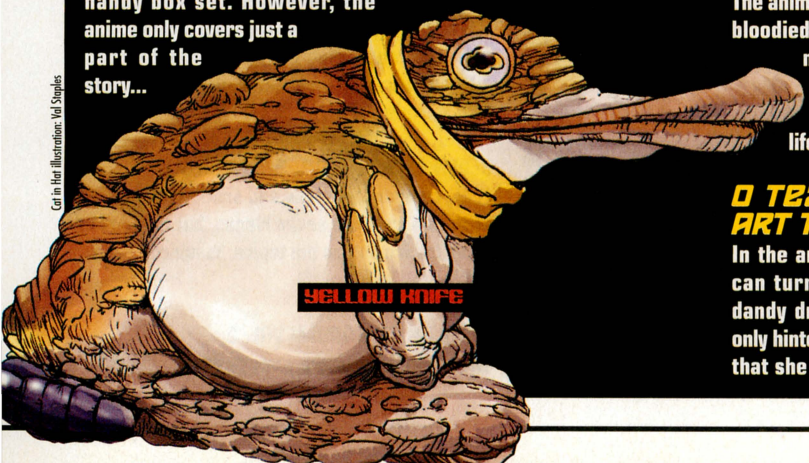
O TEACHER, WHAT ART THOU?

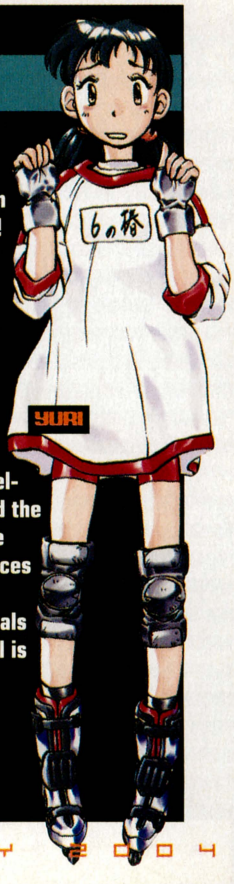
In the anime, Hisakawa-sensei can turn her hair into handy-dandy drills, but the reason is only hinted at. The manga reveals that she is an alien-human hybrid, who's been manipulating the Alien team all along!

ALIEN TURF WAR!

The anime showcases two competing alien species, the Yellow Knives and the Drill clans. The manga introduces a third alien race, and reveals that the school is being fought over by the three alien clans.

■ **Dillon Font**





Cat in Hat illustration: Val Staples

COMING COMICS

MANGA TO WATCH FOR THIS JANUARY AND FEBRUARY!

JANUARY

ASTRO BOY VOL. 23
The final volume in the classic series! Finally, Astro will get a rest from saving humans and robots from rogues of both types. Osamu Tezuka (Dark Horse, $9.95)

BERSERK VOL. 2
Against the Black Swordsman, the Count's mystery is revealed and it may be too much for anyone to defeat. Kentaro Miura (Dark Horse, $12.95)

BIG O VOL. 5
The Big O squares off against another Megadeus robot to discover the 40-year mystery surrounding Paradigm City. Hajime Yadate & Hitoshi Ariga (Viz, $9.95)

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL #86
Anotsu must discover why Makie, the warrior who once almost defeated Manji, is now trying to kill her own father. Hiroaki Samura (Dark Horse, $2.99)

BRAIN POWERED VOL. 4
Can Yuu and Hime solve the mystery of Orphan before it's too late? Yoshiyuki Tomino & Yukiru Sugisaki (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

FIGURE 17
Shy and lonely Tsubasa controls a Figure, an alien exoskeleton. But when another alien attacks will the fourth grader be able to defend herself? (ADV, 9.99)

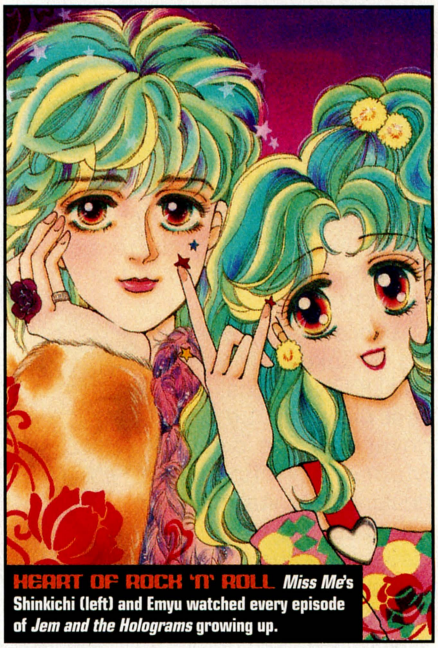
FORBIDDEN DANCE VOL. 3
The dance competition heats up when Diana is injured and the sponsor insists that Aya not perform. Hinako Ashihara (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

GIRL GOT GAME VOL. 1
Kyo, disguised as a boy, is attempting to become a basketball star, but can she keep her gender a secret? Shizuru Seino (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

HAPPY LESSON
Susumu is finally an adult, but returns home to find five teachers living there who want to be his "mama teachers," and one has a crush on him. Mutsumi Sasaki (ADV, 9.99)

INU-YASHA VOL. 16
When Naraku's latest weapon, a beautiful woman, faces off against Inu-Yasha, will he survive? Rumiko Takahashi (Viz, $8.98)

JUVENILE ORION VOL. 1
You can't go home again, as Mana is discovering. Not only are old friends being weird, but she's just discovered she's a player in a mythical war that threatens the universe. Sakurako Gokurakuin (Broccoli, $9.99)



HEART OF ROCK 'N' ROLL *Miss Me*'s Shinkichi (left) and Emyu watched every episode of *Jem and the Holograms* growing up.

KARE KANO VOL. 7
During the cultural festival, old flames heat up and Tsubaki discovers she has a rival. Masami Tsuda (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

KNIGHTS OF THE ZODIAC VOL. 1
Saint Seiya faces many challenges to become a hero in the Galaxian Wars, but can he take on the universe? Masami Kurumada (Viz, $7.95)

MISS ME?
Mixed-up romance and love await when a teen falls for a rocker, whose best friend has the hots for her. Tomoko Taniguchi (CPM, $9.99)

PET SHOP OF HORRORS VOL. 4
Is Count D a serial killer? Can Leon protect him, if he is? Akino Matsuri (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

RECORD OF LODOSS WAR: THE LADY OF PHARIS VOL. 2
Life as the Lodoss knows it will be destroyed if an eclectic group of fighters can't defeat evil forces interested in total annihilation. Ryo Mizuno & Akihiro Yamada (CPM, $15.95)

SEVEN OF SEVEN VOL. 2
Love, romance, comedy and school, all get equal attention from the seven Nanas, but that doesn't mean each masters the topics. Yasuhiro Imagawa (ADV, 9.99)

STEEL ANGEL KURUMI VOL. 2
The Steel Angels are sexy androids searching

HOT PICK

A.I. LOVE YOU VOL. 1
By Ken Akamatsu (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

#1 HIT FROM THE CREATOR OF *LOVE HINA*



WHAT IT'S ABOUT Hitoshi's not a normal kid. He sucks at just about everything, gets teased by jocks, laughed at by girls, and generally treated bad by almost everyone around him. But Hitoshi's a genius at designing realistic artificial intelligence programs. He's created dozens, but his favorite is the beautiful girl he calls Number 30. He fantasizes about what life would be like if she were real and even promises to be her main squeeze. Imagine his surprise when an electrical storm animates Number 30. Can Hitoshi actually follow through with his promises now that she's "real"?

WHY IT'S COOL With all the charm and flair of a John Hughes movie, *A.I. Love You* is a hysterical romantic comedy with a WB twist and flavor. Take the nerds from *Weird Science*, add the computer beauty from *Chobits*, and you've got the perfect formula for fun and insanity that dominates this series from the creator of *Love Hina*. When Number 30 pops out of Hitoshi's computer, it doesn't change the fact that he's still a shy, introverted geek or make everything instantly okay. Akamatsu is a master at making convincing relationships out of bizarre circumstances, and make them wildly entertaining to boot. Catch it February 3rd! ■ JC

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EXCLUSIVE Interviews with the
creators behind *New X-Men* #151

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Getting to Know

NARUMI KAKINOUCHI



What do vampires and Disney have in common? They're both tops on Narumi Kakinouchi's list. The eclectic mangaka has brought multiple undead worlds to life in the pages of *Vampire Miyu*, *Vampire Yui* and the upcoming *Vampire Yui Kanoasho.*

How'd you get into the manga biz?
When I was an animator, I drew manga for *Susperia* magazine as a promotion for the *Vampire Miyu* OVA. This opportunity led to an official offer from them to run a title on their magazine and it became my full time job.



What do you like best about your job?
I always liked to draw ever since I was little, and I get so much joy out of drawing. Also now that my books are being translated in overseas like this, I feel like my job has really broadened my mind.

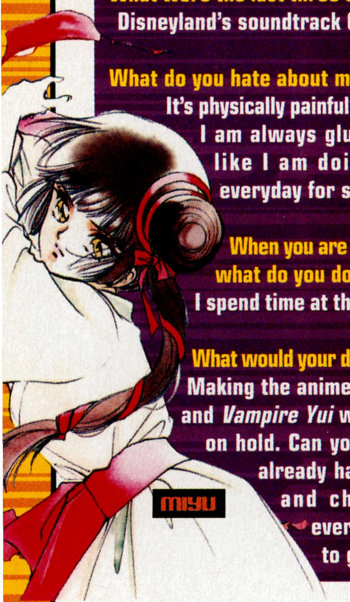
What's your favorite anime?
Horusu no Daibouken and *The Lion King.* Recently I find the anime called *Hanada Shounenshi* really interesting.

What were the last three CDs you bought?
Disneyland's soundtrack CD. *(Laughs)*

What do you hate about making manga?
It's physically painful sometimes...as I am always glued to the desk like I am doing homework everyday for school. *(Laughs)*

When you are feeling stressed, what do you do to unwind?
I spend time at the Disney resort.

What would your dream project be?
Making the anime version of *Lin3* and *Vampire Yui* which have been on hold. Can you believe that I already have storyboards and characters and everything all ready to go? *(sob)* ■ JC



for kidnapped victims and up against impossible odds and powerful evil forces. Kaishaku (ADV, 9.99)

SUPER MANGA BLAST! #39
Anthology collection of *Club 9*, *Hypernotes*, *Seraphic Feather*, *Shadow Star*, *3x3 Eyes* and *What's Michael?* Various (Dark Horse, $5.99)

THE VISION OF ESCAFLOWNE VOL. 4
In the Forest of Deception, Hitomi, Van and Shian fight against Zaibach with Earth and their lives in the balance. Katsu Aki (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

TRIGUN VOL. 2
Vash has a big price on his head, but nobody's been able to collect yet. Will Vash's luck hold out against any Legato Bluesummers? Yasuhiro Nightow (Dark Horse, $14.95)

ULTRAMAN TIGA #6
Ultraman does well when it's one-on-one, but how will he fare against a pair of alien creatures? Tony Wong, Khoo Fuk Lung & UDON (Dark Horse, $3.99)

FEBRUARY

ALIEN NINE: EMULATORS
The Alien Party is in junior high and their new classmates include someone who's either going to be an asset or an enemy. Hitoshi Tomizawa (CPM, $9.99)

AZUMANGA DAIOH VOL. 3
It's senior year for the girls and besides studying they have to participate in school competitions, sports and other extra curricular activities. Kiyohiko Azuma (ADV, 9.99)

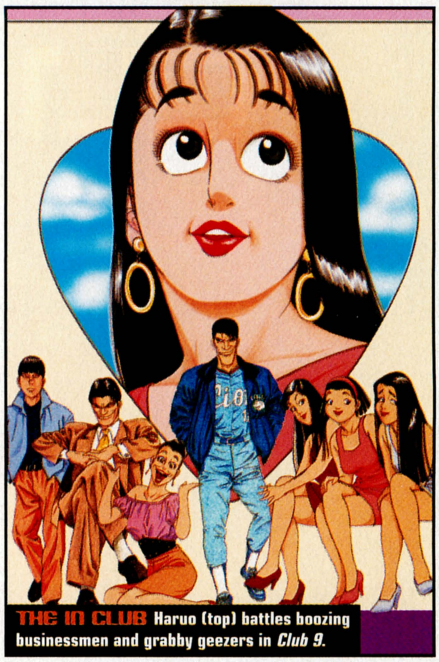
CLUB 9 VOL. 3
Can Haruo remain true to her boyfriend with all the temptations of the Ginza and the big city? Makoto Kobayashi (Dark Horse, $15.95)

DI GI CHARAT: DEJIKO'S ADVENTURE VOL. 1
Several adventures await Dejiko and her laser eye beam; will she be up for each task? Yuki Kiriga & Koge-Donbo (Broccoli, $9.99)

FRUITS BASKET VOL. 1
Tohru thought herself lucky when the Sohma family took her in until she discovered their secret: when hugged by a member of the opposite sex, they turn into animals! Natsuki Takaya (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

FULL METAL PANIC VOL. 3
Can an undercover agent keep a rambunctious high schooler safe, when she doesn't even know she needs protection? Shouji Gatou (ADV, 9.99)

GRAVITATION VOL. 4
Romance ends and new relationships begin as



THE IN CLUB Haruo (top) battles boozing businessmen and grabby geezers in *Club 9.*

Shuichi's song nears number one. Maki Murakami (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

INITIAL D VOL. 10
Tak regrets racing on Mt. Akagi, but will his candor stop Iggy from doing the same? Shuichi Shigeno (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

JING: KING OF BANDITS VOL. 5
Jing wants to steal a mask, but gladiators stand in his way. Yuichi Kumakura (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

JUST A GIRL VOL. 1
Erica's on her own, but not sure if she has what it takes to "grow up" or if she'll always be a kid. Tomoko Taniguchi (CPM, $9.99)

KILL ME, KISS ME VOL. 1
A girl switches identities with her male cousin to be close to her idol, but in an all boys' school, pulling off this exchange is tough. Lee Young Yuu (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

KWAIDAN
A 12th century romance featuring ghosts, demons, good, evil, revenge, and redemption. Jung & Jee-Yun (Dark Horse, $14.94)

MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH II VOL. 1
Cephiro is in danger again and the Magic Knights return to help. CLAMP (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

SHONEN JUMP VOL. 2 # 2
Another eclectic collection of *Dragon Ball Z*, *Hikaru no Go*, *Naruto*, *One Piece*, *Shaman King*, *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and *Yu Yu Hakusho.* Various (Viz, $4.95)

SUKI VOL. 1
Hinata's got a crush on her next-door neighbor and teacher Shirou, but what does he think of her? CLAMP (TOKYOPOP, $9.99)

GIANT CLIX GAME SPECIALTY GUIDE!





INQUEST gamer

#106

PREVIEW MAGIC The Gathering® DARKSTEEL

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IN 'GOD' SONY TRUSTS

'TOKYO GODFATHERS' JOINS THE CROWDED ANIME OSCAR RACE



GOING FOR THE GOLD Gin (left), Miyuki and baby may end up leaving Hana (right) behind for the Oscars ceremony.

When Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature Film last year, it was a milestone for anime that marked a huge change in America's perception of the genre and doubled the film's U.S. revenues to $10 million after the win. So it makes perfect sense that Sony-owned Columbia Tri Star has high hopes for their latest foray into anime, Satoshi Kon's *Tokyo Godfathers*. In fact, hopes are so high that they made sure it was a contender for the Oscars.

"We had a very limited release of the film at the beginning of December in Los Angeles...for an Academy run to fulfill the requirement for consideration," explained Fritz Friedman, senior vice president of worldwide publicity at Columbia TriStar. It's a move industry insiders applaud, especially after Miyazaki's achievement last year. "In the wake of *Spirited Away*'s win, the frontrunners in this category like Disney and DreamWorks are weakened," theorized Anderson Jones, E! Online's movie columnist.

But Friedman insisted that the company's motivation didn't have much to do with the *Spirited Away* win last year. "Are we doing it because it won the Oscar last year?" he asked. "No, we are doing it because this film is an extraordinary anime movie."

Tokyo Godfathers is a story about three homeless people who find a baby on Christmas Day. "It is also an allegory to the Christ story," Friedman explained. "You have the three wise men, you have this baby found in the garbage, which parallels the baby in the manger...you have a Christian myth put within a Japanese context."

You can judge for yourself when the subtitled film arrives in theaters for its wider limited release in 2004. "We have tentatively planned to [primarily] release *Tokyo Godfathers* around January 16, but that date may change. We may move it to February," Friedman revealed.

But is *Godfathers* strong enough to grab an Academy Award? It will have to duke it out with several other anime films to take the prize; Kon's *Millennium Actress*, *Pokémon Heroes* and *Patlabor WXIII* have all been submitted for nomination. See the results when the Oscar nominations are announced on January 27. ■ Jenny Peters

TRAILERS

TINY BITS OF UPCOMING NEWS

MEET THE DEVILMAN Toei Animation held a press conference in October 2003 where they revealed the cast and crew of the live-action version of Go Nagai's *Devilman*. The movie is directed by Hiroyuki Nasu and will star brothers Hisato and Yusuke Izaki from the J-pop group Flame as Devilman and Ryo Asuka, respectively. No word on if the brothers will contribute to the score.

ANOTHER 'PIECE' The *One Piece* crew sets out for a fifth theatrical adventure, starring young rubber-bodied pirate Monkey D. Luffy. This time Luffy and his crew search for a mysterious castle and a treasure guarded by haunted knight and his possessed sword. The movie is due March 6 in Japan; here's hoping someone will announce the TV series by then.

'GHOST' STORY The long-awaited sequel to *Ghost in the Shell* finally has a release date. Helmed by the director of the original, Mamoru Oshii, and animated by Production I.G., *Innocence* will hit theaters on March 17. A sequel to the original 1995 movie, *Innocence* will reportedly tie-in to I.G.'s *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* TV series. ■ Jim Dewey & Trisha L. Sebastian



GHOST IN THE SHELL: INNOCENCE

GONZO SHOWS ITS 'SPIRIT'

ROMANCE AFTER THE END OF THE WORLD? IN GONZO'S FIRST FEATURE FILM, THEY DESTROY THE MOON

Gonzo, the world-famous animation studio responsible for anime smash hits like *Last Exile* and *Hellsing*, is finally throwing their hat into the theatrical ring. *Spirit* (the English title will be determined later), the first full-length animated motion picture from Gonzo Digimation, is due out in either winter 2004 or spring 2005, and no, it doesn't have any talking horses in it.

The story follows a romance between star-crossed lovers, Agito and Toola, set against a war-torn, post-apocalyptic Earth where an unknown event has destroyed the moon. The film deals heavily with themes of technology versus nature, revealed Gonzo's international creative director Eric Calderon. "Great attention and detail is given to transport the viewer into a time where the dilapidated relics of our present are overgrown with a thousand years of nature's growth and humanity builds on top of the wreckage of the past. Although it will contain the next level of our signature 2D/3D style, the important part of the film is the human story and the struggle for love and hope," Calderon added.



LUNAR TRICKS You know, after living in a world without a moon for a bit, Agito and Toola kinda get used to it.

Gonzo's reasons for producing a theatrical film are many, according to CEO Showji Murahama. "Ever since we established Gonzo we have dreamed of someday making a feature-length animation film," he admitted. "However, in order to produce something the Gonzo-style using high quality images we had to overcome numerous difficulties such as the hardware, software and of course financially. We opted not to compromise but to aim for perfection."

While Gonzo's Japanese fans are already hotly anticipating this film, American fans will have to wait—Gonzo hasn't licensed it for American distribution yet. ■ Zac Bertschy

COMING SOON...IN JAPAN

NEXT UP IN TOKYO THEATERS!

With the new year comes new Japanese theatrical releases! Here's the hottest flicks still cooking in the anime studios.

HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE

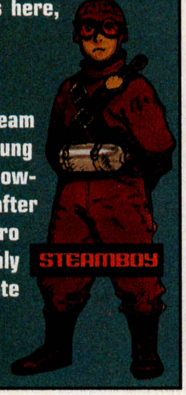
Studio Ghibli finally announced the Japanese release date for this movie, based on the book by Diana Wynne Jones. July 17 is the big day to watch for Miyazaki's latest, about a girl named Sophie who is turned into an old woman by a witch and must make a deal with the nefarious wizard Howl to regain her youth.

NARUTO

If you're a young ninja in training with the sprit of the beast that nearly destroyed your village trapped inside himself, what's a guy to do? While the manga is newly released to American shelves, there's little word other than the first movie being released this August by Toho in Japan. *Naruto* fan numbers grow by the day, and granting release of the show episodes here, it's natural the feature will follow suit.

STEAMBOY

Set in 19th century Britain, a mysterious "steam ball" with untamed energy is entrusted to a young boy, who must use it to stop unmanned steam-powered mechanisms that begin to appear one after another throughout the city! From Katuhiro Otomo, creator of *Akira*, this oft-delayed, highly anticipated feature now has a broad release date of Autumn 2004. ■ Jim Dewey



JAPAN BOX OFFICE

CAN U.S. FILMS DO WELL IN NIPPON THEATERS?

Anime may be a fast-growing phenomenon over here, but the cultural exchange flows both ways! Disney's early films inspired the look of anime today, so it's no surprise that Walt's films are just as popular in Japan as they are in the United States. We've cataloged the performance of our animated hits overseas below—in 2003 dollars. ■ Bryan Reesman


MIKE

THE TOP 10 AMERICAN ANIMATED FILMS IN JAPAN

RANK	TITLE	COMPANY	B.O. Gross
1.	**Monsters, Inc.** (2002)	*Pixar/Disney*	$80.2 M
2.	**Toy Story 2** (2000)	*Pixar/Disney*	$29.5 M
3.	**Tarzan** (2000)	*Disney/Buena Vista*	$23.9 M
4.	**Aladdin** (1993)	*Disney/Buena Vista*	$21.4 M
5.	**Shrek** (2002)	*DreamWorks*	$19.3 M
6.	**Stuart Little** (2000)	*Columbia Pictures*	$17.1 M
7.	**Ice Age** (2002)	*Blue Sky/ 20th Century Fox*	$16.6 M
8.	**The Lion King** (1994)	*Disney/Buena Vista*	$16.7 M
9.	**Beauty & The Beast** (1992)	*Disney/Buena Vista*	$13.7 M
10.	**Who Framed Roger Rabbit?** (1989)	*Amblin/Buena Vista*	$12.3 M

BATTLE TACTICS

'FINAL FANTASY XII' TO REVIVE THE WORLD OF 'FF TACTICS ADVANCE'

Did you just finish *Final Fantasy X-2*? Already made your *FFXI* online hero as powerful as he's gonna get? Thought you could rest? Tough, *Final* fanatics—*Final Fantasy XII* is already on the way, and it's a doozie.

Square Enix has unveiled the newest installment in this venerable RPG series, and there's a bigger difference than just another 'I' on the title. This time they've given the series—instead of to *FFVII*, *VIII* and *X* director Yoshinori Kitase—to Yasumi Matsuno, best known for the strategy RPG best-sellers *Final Fantasy Tactics* and *FF Tactics Advance*.

In a startling move, Matsuno revealed that the setting of *FFXII* would be Ivalice, the world of both *Tactics* games. "It will be another version of that world," explained art director Hideo Manaba.

The connections between *XII* and *TA* are many, not the least of which are several non-human races, such as the lizard-like Bangaa and the bunny-eared Viera. But the Judges, the promoters or law and fairness in battle in *TA*, are now "knights of terror" in *FFXII*, and the player's main adversary.



SKIRTING THE ISSUE Can a beautiful princess defeat an empire? You bet your Ashe!





The setting starts off with two empires, Arcadia and Roasaria, already fighting a long-standing war. Situated in-between, in a small kingdom called Damasca ruled by the Arcadia empire, a young man named Vaan dreams of escaping to become an airship pirate. When he meets Ashe, the ex-princess of Damasca and the leader of the Damasca resistance, the story of *FFXII* begins.

Square Enix is keeping quiet on *FFXII*'s combat for now, but early screenshots suggest the standard three-person battle party. The game will also be totally offline, unlike *FFXI*. There's more good news for purists; Matsuno promises the series' standard Chocobos, Mogs and the Cid character will all appear in Ivalice.

"A lot of our staff have worked on the world before," says Manaba. "Now we get to present it in a new way. Once you play it, it will be fresh and shocking...but in a good way."

Japanese fans can judge for themselves when *FFXII* is released in summer of 2004; an American release isn't scheduled, but could be expected in early 2005. ■ Robert Bricken

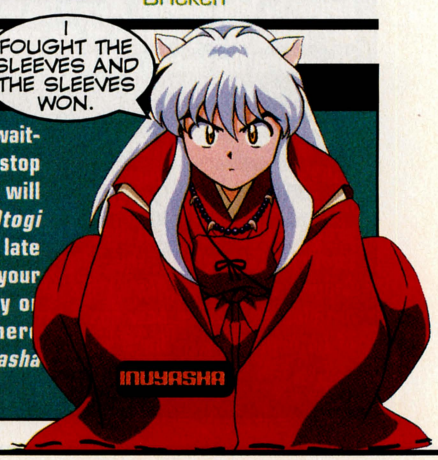
BITS OF BYTES

THE LATEST WORD ON GAMI

FUNNY FIGHT CLUB Famed Japanese developer Hudson mixed its own cast of characters into the brawler *Dream Mix: TV World Fighters*. The four-player beat 'em up—currently being shopped to stateside publiers for a 2004 release— features characters from *Bomberman*, *Transformers* and dozens of other series.

A CALL TO ARMS Sony's upcoming PS2 remake of the original PSOne game *Wild Arms: Alter Code*, will star four, never-before-seen characters: Magdalen Harts, Ema Hetfield, Jane Maxwell and Captain Bartholomew (although, good ol' Cap isn't actually playable). While no U.S. date has been set, Sony says plans are underway for a domestic release.

YASHA IN DA CASA Those waiting for a PS2 *Inuyasha* can stop holding their breath—Bandai will bring *Inuyasha: Sengoku Otogi Gassen* for a U.S. release in late 2004. The game transports your present day character—boy o girl—into feudal Japan wher you'll meet up with the *Inuyasha* gang. ■ JG



ALL REVVED UP

'INITIAL D' SPEEDS ITS WAY ONTO THE PC

Keep your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road—'cause if you think about anything else when playing *Initial D: Mountain Vengeance*, you're bound to be left choking on a cloud of exhaust.

"We're bringing all the glory, passion, pain and revenge experienced by Tak and the other street racers throughout the manga series and anime to gamers," explained Nicole Yolitz, marketing director at ValuSoft, the game's developer. In conjunction with anime licensor TOKYOPOP, the high-octane racer will be roaring its way onto PCs in early 2004.

As Tak—or a handful of other characters yet to be unveiled—road racers will navigate four cliffside courses, experiencing the intensity of drift racing in full-fledged 3D on par with the CG sequences in the anime.

It's drift racing that sets *Initial D* apart from other racing games. Rather than just race normally, players can turn the car sharply enough so that it slides—or drifts—on its wheels, making for some exciting near-misses on the curves.

Even though the story elements are few and far between, the game touches on the rivalries from the first season of the show, as commented on by Iggy. The show's original score will also be used in the game.

"Upon beating an opponent in four mini tracks, players will unlock the full mountain track," Yolitz continued. "Each track is modeled after those found in the manga and show, which are based on real-world roads in Japan."

While *Mountain Vengeance* isn't related to Sega's *Initial D* videogame currently in Japanese arcades, the goal is very much the same—to win.

"Just remember the motto: 'Earn your turf and defend your turf,'" Yolitz assured. "Knowing that, you'll drive just fine." ■ JG





DRIFT AWAY *Mountain Vengeance* isn't just a drift racing sim, it's a tofu delivery sim.



TO IMPORT OR NOT TO IMPORT?

BRING IT!

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION 2: SHINSEIKI EVANGELIONS (PS2)

ANGELS WE HAVE PLAYED ON HIGH

HOW TO PLAY: There may never be an anime sequel, but Studio Gainax themselves announced this game would serve as the official continuation to the ground-breaking anime. As Shinji, Rei, or Asuka, you're tossed into the world of *Evangelion* without many limitations. Basically, once you power-up your PS2, you're free to explore nearly everything you've ever caught a glimpse of in the anime—and even a few secrets never before exposed in the show.



ANALYSIS: Think of *Shinseiki Evangelions* as the ultimate anime simulation. While not the no-holds-barred combat extravaganza you might expect—even though there are spectacular 3D battles to engage in, with brand-new combat armor for Shinji's EVA-01—it's certainly a treat for the otaku crowd. Let's just hope game maker Bandai—or anybody else—decides to bring this sequel stateside.



KEEP IT!

KATAMARI DAMACY (PS2)

TAKE OUT THE TRASH!

HOW TO PLAY: As annoying as it is to tie up that trash bag in the kitchen and cart it off to the dumpster, someone in Tokyo actually finds it pleasurable. Ordered by the King of Cosmo, your duty as Prince Toba is to eliminate a mass of trash on Earth, which means you find all the trash you can and roll it into a huge, disgusting garbage ball. Smell all that fun!







ANALYSIS: While Japan can often whip up magic out of the zaniest concepts, when that zany concept is based on refuse and litter, magic is a lot harder. And when all you do is collect trash and roll it into ball after ball, magic is really, really dull. If you play, just make sure you dispose of the game and your PlayStation 2 properly.

AN EPIPHANY WITH TRASH
Rei (far left) may think of herself as trash but *Katamari* deserves to be in it.

RELEASE SCHEDULE

WE PICK 'EM, YOU PLAY 'EM. HERE'S WHAT'S COMING SOON...

JANUARY

HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE

This latest installment brings over 40 new characters into the picture, and a new event system spanning over 30 years. You'll spend a lifetime raising livestock, picking corn and more in this *Animal Crossing*-like sim for the inspired farmer inside all of us. (Natsume, GameCube)



MAXIMO VS. THE ARMY OF ZIN

This sequel takes place eight months after the original *Ghost 'n Goblins* remake, detailing Maximo and Grim's search for Sophia. Alas, their platform/action quest to find her is interrupted by a band of steampunk monsters powered by the souls of the dead. (Capcom, PS2)

RIVER CITY RANSOM EX

Slick, the most bad-ass of all gang leaders, has proclaimed himself ruler of the streets of River City. Too bad Alex and Ryan aren't going to stand for it. To save their fellow students—not to mention Alex's sexy girlfriend—you'll have to bruise all the baddies until there's none left in this revival of a vintage NES beat-'em-up. (Atlus, GBA)

SONIC HEROES

Followers of the endless Sonic series know one thing's for sure—that speedy blue hedgehog keeps getting into thicker, more complicated messes. This time around, Knuckles and Tails will be rolling right alongside him, each applying their talents to the world-saving task at hand. Sometimes you'll need Tails' flight; other times, you'll have to use Knuckles', err, powerful knuckles. (Sega, GameCube, PS2 & Xbox)

SUDEKI

Role-playing games are a rare breed on the Xbox, so *Sudeki* is already primed to impress just because of the genre void it fills. But with its bizarre cocktail of Hong Kong combat, wizardry, and traditional RPG elements, it should appeal to more than just the hardcore *Final Fantasy* crowd. (Microsoft, Xbox)



FEBRUARY

DRIFT RACER: KAIDO BATTLE

While it's unlike most racers you've probably played, *Kaido Battle* is a great example of a current overseas trend: drift racing (something *Initial D* has helped to popularize in the U.S.). You'll typically be pitted against one other car on very narrow mountain courses, with uphill and downhill competitions alike. (Sammy, PS2)

FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

In a revolutionary change of pace for the *Final Fantasy* franchise, *Crystal Chronicles* allows up to four friends to adventure through an epic role-playing landscape...together! Additionally, each player's stats are displayed only on their respective Game Boy Advance (using the system's nifty link cable). *Final Fantasy* turned into a social combat game? Madness! But outrageously fun nonetheless. (Square Enix, GameCube)

GRADIUS V

It's been a few years since *Gradius III* and *IV* arrived on the PS2, but the Vic Viper spaceship makes a comeback in this hyper-cool, side-scrolling shooter. A mesh of 2D gameplay and



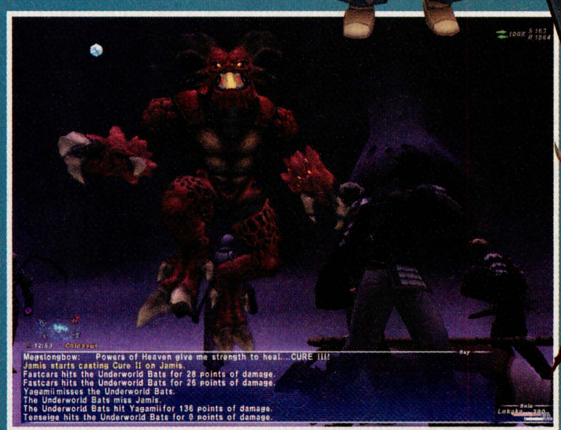
HOT PICK

FINAL FANTASY XI

Due in February from Square Enix on PlayStation 2

This is for all you Final Fantasy fans who are worried about *FFXI* being a Massively-Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game: stop worrying. *Final Fantasy XI* rocks. If you missed 2003's PC release, you have no excuse for missing the PS2 release.

Final Fantasy XI has more story than any other MMORPG on the market, and it's gorgeous to boot. It's got all the classic FF features, from the character classes to the spells to the Chocobo riding. Choose one of five character races, including the Humes, the warrior-like Elvans, the overwhelmingly cute Tarutarus, the sexy feline Mithra, and the hulking Galkas—then explore the gigantic world of Vana'diel, either on your own or in a party of up to sixteen! Slay monsters, fulfill countless missions, trade items, or just socialize.



While the PS2 graphics might not be as sharp as the PC version, since the game was designed for the PS2, the controls are definitely much easier to learn on the controller pad as opposed to the keyboard. Plus, *FFXI* has the distinction of being the very first MMORPG to let PC and PS2 gamers play together online. ■ JG

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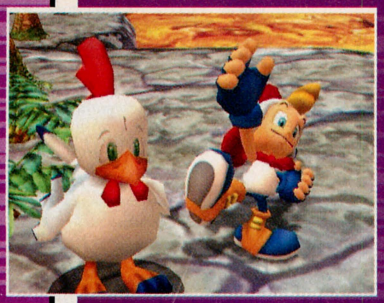
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HOT TIPS

SECRETS FOR THE BEST GAMERS ONLY



BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG (GAMECUBE)

To unlock a downloadable GBA mini-game, collect and hatch the following bonus eggs in this order: Chu Chu Rocket (Pirates Island 2), Nights (Circus Park 2), Hyper Shoot Easy (Dino Mountain 2), Hyper Shoot Hard (Sand Ruin 2), and Puyo Pop (Blizzard Castle 3).

CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE (PS2)

After you complete the game, save the file. When you go into Rinaldo's cottage, you can buy the Music Box and play all the music at the main menu. Also, if you beat the game as Joachim Armster and save it, enter @PUMPKIN as your name at the name entry screen to unlock the rather wacky "Pumpkin Mode."



KIRBY'S AIR RIDE (GAMECUBE)

If you're itching for some extra vehicles, here's how to unlock a few of the more rare ones. For the Turbo Star, use all the volcano rails and finish in first place in the Magma Flows level. For the Formula Star, finish the Frozen Hillside level in time attack mode in under 3:14:00. And for a super-special cinema, glide for a total of one hour.

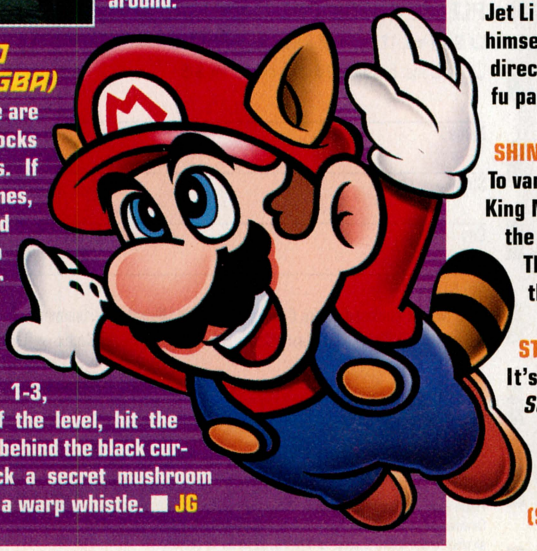


MEGAMAN X7 (PS2)

For a sweet completion bonus, successfully chart your way through the game. Then choose the "New Game+" option to begin with your previous chips, X, and armor. Now that should make the game a bit easier the second time around.

SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 4 (GBA)

In most levels, there are multi-colored blocks held up by screws. If you hit the white ones, you can go behind the play area to evade baddies or find hidden exits by holding down on the D-pad for five seconds. In World 1-3, towards the end of the level, hit the white block and run behind the black curtain. You will unlock a secret mushroom house that contains a warp whistle. ■ JG





LUPIN & FUJIKO

pseudo-3D visuals, this fifth installment is an arcade geek's dream come true, complete with plenty of new weapons and mechanics. (Konami, PS2)

LUPIN THE 3RD: TREASURE OF THE SORCEROR KING

"The World's Most Wanted" (and delayed) international thief is being pursued by the relentless—albeit bumbling—Interpol Inspector Zenigata yet again, but this time the proceedings are interactive. Players will use lots of stealth and disguises to make their way to 10 million worth of gold coins. (Bandai, PS2)

MEGAMAN: ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION

Stuffed full with *Mega Man 1* through *8* (spanning NES, SNES, Game Boy, and PSOne), two never-before-released-in-the-U.S. arcade romps (*Mega Man: The Power Battle* and *Mega Man 2: The Power Fighters*), as well as unlockable art, producer interviews, TV commercials, 30 minutes of anime footage, and much more. Bon appetit, fanboys! (Capcom, PS2 & GameCube)

METAL SLUG ADVANCE

Considered by many to be one of the best side-scrollers series ever, *Metal Slug Advance* takes the gory, 16-bit action and puts it in the palm of your hand. (SNK, GBA)

ONIMUSHA: BLADE WARRIORS

While you'll have to wait a bit longer for *Onimusha 3*, Capcom tides your samurai urges over with this spin-off of the popular franchise. However, it's not a survival horror game—it's a fighting romp that lets you play as all of your favorite characters from the series, even demons. (Capcom, PS2)



R-TYPE FINAL

Often considered the granddaddy of strategic shooting, this "final" installment of the long-running *R-Type* franchise remains true to its roots. The hardest of the hardcore should find solace in its 8-bit, sci-fi prowess. (Eidos, PS2)

RISE TO HONOR

Jet Li lends his voice and motion-capture moves to a digital version of himself. With a basic control scheme, endless streams of bullets, and direction by action maven Corey Yuen (*The Transporter*), it's a kung-fu package that's hard to pass up. (Sony, PS2)

SHINING SOUL 2

To vanquish the horde of monsters rampaging the kingdom of Klantol, King Marcel holds a contest. That's where you come in, entering into the last-ditch-effort disguised as a competition of mighty warriors. There's four new character classes, a multiplayer coliseum to battle with friends, and a new side quest system. (Atlus, GBA)

STAR OCEAN: TIL THE END OF TIME

It's been over 400 years since the events in *Star Ocean: The Second Story*. Now, out in the depths of space, the gods have tossed a giant meteorite at the planet Expel, setting in motion the destruction of the entire universe. Two strangers are the key to saving all of humanity from the impending doom. (Square Enix, PS2)

EXCLUSIVE

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STUFF

HITTING THE BOOKS

Reading has never been quite so bad-ass. In order to keep their nifty (and book-like) Robotech Masterpiece Edition toys sitting pretty on the shelf, Toynami has made these limited edition Robotech Bookends. Shin Tanabe sculpted Roy Fokker's VF-1S Veritech, ready to blast through your favorites reads to destroy a pesky Zentraedi Battlepod. At $149.99 and only 500 made, as soon as you see it, buy it! **www.toynami.com**



THE SOUNDS OF GAINAX

Save your pennies, because January's going to be a tight month. Geneon will release not only the *His & Hers Circumstances* soundtrack and the first acclaimed *Neon Genesis Evangelion* soundtrack—but also the *FLCL* soundtrack, featuring the J-rock band The Pillows and easily the coolest CD ever made by human beings. It's three Studio Gainax wonders; $14.98 each never sounded so good. **www.geneonanimation.com**



OF BOOKS AND BIKINIS



Mizuho's an alien sent to Earth to observe it, but you can't help but observe this tantalizing alien beauty in her bikini! This *Please Teacher* Bikini PVC Statue can be yours for $24.99, but the 4" tall Mizuho's heart belongs completely to Kei Kusanagi. **www.toycom.net**

KEY TO THE TOUR

Goku may be searching the galaxy for the Dragon Balls, but you won't need to search for your keys any longer with these awesome new *Dragon Ball GT* keychains! Made of 3D rubber and with over six to choose from, including Pan, Goku and Gogeta, you can power up your keys and go anywhere at only $4.50 each. **www.geanimation.com**



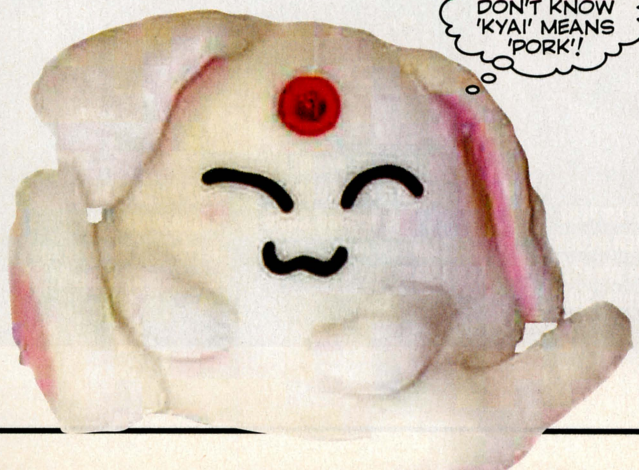


COME PLAY THEIR GAME

One of Bandai's most ambitious projects ever, *.hack* has been making huge waves with its manga, anime, videogames and CCG—and now it's got action figures! Mimuru and Subaru both stand over 6" tall and have multiple articulation for their own digital adventures, for only $11.99 each! **www.toycom.net**

MASCOT AHOY!

In *Magic Knights Rayearth*, Mokona is the cute and magical semi-rabbit that provides the girls with whatever they need. Now, this life-sized 8" tall Mokona plush toy can provide you with lots of cuddling and fuzzy love, for only $24.99! Just make sure it doesn't pull you into a fantasy world! **www.geanimation.com**



HOT PICK

KAIJU BIG BATTEL

When giant, deranged monsters from across the universe are flooding Earth to do battle, the best defense is to know what you're up against! Thank goodness for Hyperion Books' *Kaiju Big Battel*, a practical guide about these city-crushing aliens for only $14.95. With run-downs on all the key monsters, photos and more, not only can you lay the smack down on these monsters, but you can enlighten the uneducated masses as well. Check out www.anime-insider.com for a six-page preview! www.hyperionbooks.com





HEADING INTO THE SUNRISE

Evildoers beware—the Sunrise Robots Figure Set will cut you down to size! At 3" tall and $25 for the set, you can collect Genetic GaoGaiGar, GaiGar, Sai Hinoki, Lune Cardiff (all from *GaoGaiGar*), Super Aquabeat and Winzard!

DRAWIN' LIKE A GOD



There are lots of how-to guides for fans to draw in an "anime" style out there, but why settle when you can be taught by "God of Manga" and *Astro Boy* creator Osamu Tezuka? With 104 pages for only $13.95 each, the *Tezuka School of Animation* Vols. 1 and 2 from Digital Manga Publishing will have you mastering the basics in no time! **www.emanga.com/dmp**

ATTACK OF THE ZODIAC



Saint Seiya, or *Knights of the Zodiac*, may be nothing new to Japan but their 5" figures are! At only $11.25 each, this first wave of *Knights of the Zodiac* action figures is sure to be a favorite toy all year 'round. Choose from Pegasus Seiya, Dragon Shiryu, Swan Hyoga, Andromeda Shun, Phoenix Ikki, Black Pegasus, and Black Dragon. **www.bandai.com**



HEADS UP!

Halloween's long over, but there's no reason to stop the fright fest from continuing all year 'round! Get your paws on these freaky-looking Berserk Befferit Collectible Resin Pendants from Art of War for only $11.99 each, and scare the hell out of random strangers on the street. **www.toycom.net**



THE PAPER CHASE

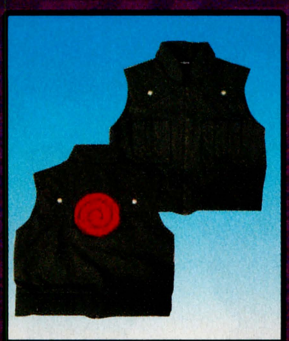
If you can't get enough of the car-racin' action in the *Initial D* CCG, Alderac has what you need to take your card game to the edge. The first expansion set, *Racer's Edge*, contains five new cars, six new drivers, including Tak's father Bunta, and way more mods for the utmost in driving power! Decks, $12.99; Booster Packs $3.29 **www.initialdccg.com**

"SOLD" ONLINE

SOME OF THE CRAZY CRAP PEOPLE ARE SELLING ON THE 'NET



***LOVE HINA* NARU 3-FOOT FIGURINE DOLL**
Too big for a shelf, too small to marry. $285.99



***NARUTO* NINJA VEST**
Keeps you warm while you lurk outside, waiting to strike. $79.98



***RAVE MASTER* PLUE UFO CATCHER PLUSH**
Forget the plush; we want his doughnut. $9.99



JAPANESE PHONE BOOTH TOY ROBOT
Transforming Colin Farrell not included. $33



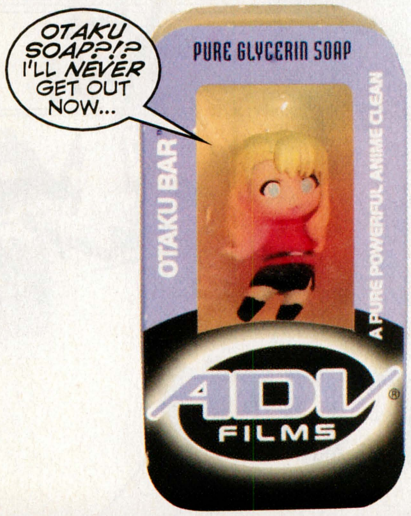
***ONE PIECE* PIRATE SKULL BATH TOWEL**
Terrorize and pillage your own bathtub! $16

Your source for the Hottest Toys and Games!



BUBBLE BABES

Ahhh, soap. Not only does it make you smell good, it's also integral...to your anime collection? With this new ADV *Noir* Girls Otaku Soap for only $9.95 each, not only do you get squeaky clean, you also get a cute random collectible figure of one of *Noir*'s main characters! **www.advfilms.com**



LOOK INTO THE CARDS

There's no one Yami Yugi can't beat, but he'll need his luck more than ever now! With nefarious archfiends and new Legendary Artifact weapons, along with guardian monsters and even stronger summonings, the *Yu-Gi-Oh!* Expansion Dark Crisis CCG will challenge even the strongest of duelists, and tweak your deck in ways never before seen! **www.upperdeck.com**



THANKS, JAPAN!

GOODIES SO BIZARRE, YOU GOTTA GO TO ASIA FOR 'EM

GLOVES OFF!

One Piece **fans take note—now you can change shape from human to midget deer just like Tony Tony Chopper thanks to these fluffy mittens. They're just in time for winter too—hey, he is a reindeer, after all.**





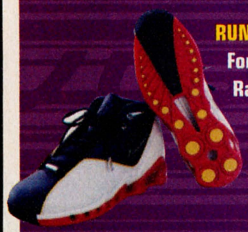
BOTTLED UP

And also just in time for winter in, uh...Australia, comes this ***Dragon Ball*** **water bottle holder in the shape of Goku's jacket. It's perfect for keeping your water cool on the beach or during hour-long battles for the fate of the Earth.**

PUKE-A-CHU

The whole point of ***Pokémon*** **is that you're supposed to catch 'em and raise them to fight. In Japan, however, you can also serve them with noodles. Surely it must traumatize kids to see those little Pikachu heads floating around in there, but it does prove that he tastes just like chicken.**





RUN FOR COVER

Forget going to cosplay dressed as Char Aznable or Amuro Ray. Now you can show up as an actual Gundam! These limited edition Nike Shox basketball sneakers are designed to resemble the Gundam color scheme and design. At 25,000¥ a pop—over $200—they'll be the only thing you can afford to wear.

BALL AND CHAIN

Worried about getting your bike stolen? Don't be! Put this ***Hamtaro*** **bicycle lock to good use, 'cause if there's one thing bike thieves are scared of, it's Hamtaro. Just don't pay attention to where you have to stick the key....■ Kumar Sivasubramanian**



DRAWING A CROWD

Chances are if you're into manga and anime, you've tried to be more like your favorite manga-ka. Now you can use the same supplies they do! With Manga BLP's Comic Book Manuscript Paper and Art Boards, in different grades from Doujinshi to Professional (prices range from $5.95 to $9.95), pretty soon you can draw like a pro! **www.bluelinepro.com**



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ON SALE FEBRUARY 18

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BY JON M. GIBSON

INSIDER PROFILE

ALITA FROM 'BATTLE ANGEL ALITA'



ORIGINS

Alita's first body was an incredibly dangerous one that once belonged to a berserker cyborg—sometimes it acted on its own! Alita changes several bodies throughout the manga.

DIGITAL DEBUT

While it was never released in the U.S., Alita starred in her own PlayStation game in 1998 called *Gunnm: Memory of the Mars*, which later became the basis for the manga sequel story *Last Order*.

MAKE LOVE NOT WAR

Alita has her soft side as well, falling in love with a young dreamer named Hugo who only wishes to reach the spectacular city in the sky, Tiphares. However, as with all cyborg romances, things don't go well.

HEAD AND SHOULDERS

Alita was really a work in progress. She started off as just a head that Ido found in a scrapyard! After rebuilding her, Doc Ido named the cyborg after his cat.

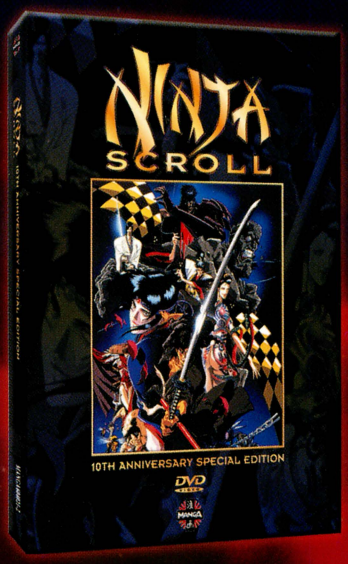
ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Alita has something hidden up her sleeve—a plasma weapon embedded in her arm! With it, she can drop cyborgs over three times her height.

ORIGIN: It's hard to pick one quintessential butt-kicker in anime, but Alita (a.k.a. Gally in Japan) is certainly near the top of the list—and she's not even human. The tough-as-nails cyborg was brought back to life thanks to a cybernetics doctor named Ido, who found her on a heap in Scrapyard City, where the lower classes live in the shadow of the floating utopian city Tiphares, home to the upper crust. After some electronic surgery, Alita discovers her phenomenal latent powers, and becomes a bounty hunter. After tragedy hits, Alita strikes out on her own and confront the terrible memories that are only beginning to surface.

NOW APPEARING: The brainchild of Yukito Kishiro, the original manga series ran biweekly from 1990 to 1995 in the Japanese *Business Jump* magazine under the title *Gunnm* ("Gun Dream"). A total of 10 volumes tell Alita's story, now published by Viz, whose new reissues now contain new extras like character profiles and an afterword. Anime-wise, though, only two 30-minute animated shorts based on the manga have been produced, which used to be available on DVD from ADV Films. Now, director James Cameron (Titanic) holds the rights, in preparation for a possible live-action movie. However, Kishiro has hinted that Alita will return to fight again.

THE HOTTEST NEW RELEASES FROM MANGA AVAILABLE FOR THE HOLIDAYS!



NINJA SCROLL 10TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EDITION

"AN ABSOLUTELY PERFECT VERSION – BOTH VISUALLY AND AUDIBLY – OF ONE OF THE MOST BELOVED ANIME OF ALL TIME" - ANIME INSIDER

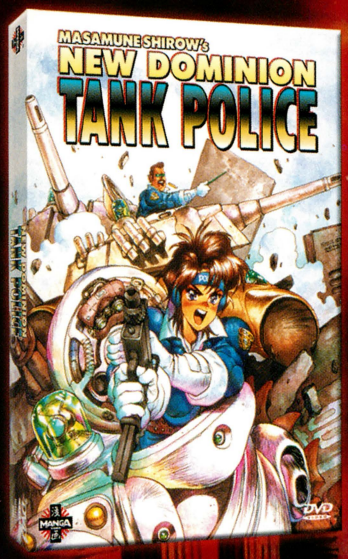
Amazing, beautiful and mysterious, *Ninja Scroll* blends the mysticism of 17th century Japan into an intensely packed tale of pulse-pounding anime action, fantasy and adventure. Directed by the revered Japanese anime veteran Yoshiaki Kawajiri *(Animatrix, Vampire Hunter D)* and masterfully rendered by Japan's acclaimed Madhouse animation studio *(Perfect Blue, X, Spawn)*, *Ninja Scroll* features a wicked cast of characters and extraordinary fight scenes combined with lightening Samurai action.

One of the most critically acclaimed and highly popular anime films of all time, *Ninja Scroll* has been completely digitally remastered visually and digitally reformatted with the latest in Surround Sound audio technology available today for the 10th Anniversary Special Edition DVD.

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NEW DOMINION TANK POLICE

"ABSOLUTELY INCREDIBLE" - PROTOCULTURE ADDICTS

Japan's manga legend Masamune Shirow *(Appleseed, Black Magic M-66, Ghost in the Shell)* personally oversaw the production of this exciting series to ensure that the anime remained faithful to his original 1992 manga books. Shirow delivers a darkly comic vision of a future overrun with fast and furious mecha, cybernetically enhanced humans and rouge androids. Contains six half-hour episodes.



ORGUSS 02

"A SUPERIOR GIANT ROBOT SERIES" - ANIME ENCYCLOPEDIA

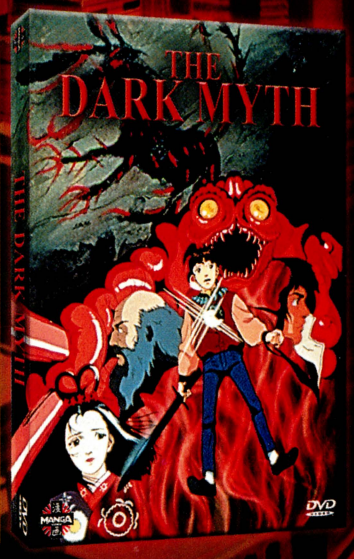
Based on the hit 35 episode Japanese television series *Orguss*, acclaimed anime director Fumihiko Takayama *(Patlabor 3 / Mobile Suit Gundam)* brings the story into the future 200 years after the original. Now available for the first time on DVD, *Orguss 02* features six pulse-pounding 30 minute episodes featuring dramatic mecha combat, giant robots and political intrigue intertwined with explosive sci-fi action.



FIST OF THE NORTH STAR VOLUME 5

"TWO-FISTED FUN" - WIZARD

Fists fly, heads explode and it's fast and furious deadly martial arts action all the way to the end. Ken's quest to save the post-nuclear world from Shin will have you glued to your screen, begging for mercy. Volume 5 contains eight new half-hour episodes never released in the U.S. An epic assault on the senses played out in this ultimate animation series from Manga... first time available on DVD!



THE DARK MYTH

"MASTERFULLY TOLD... INTERWEAVING ANCIENT JAPANESE HISTORY BUDDHIST AND HINDU MYTHOLOGY, ASTRONOMY AND HORROR" - ANIMERICA

Surreal, chilling, intelligent and complex, *The Dark Myth* is a two-part tale of forbidding prophecy and fear, weaving the mythology of ancient Japan into a web of modern horror. Music by Kenji Kawai *(Ghost in the Shell)*. Contains two 55 minute episodes.

DVD VIDEO

Available US & Canada at these & fine entertainment outlets everywhere.

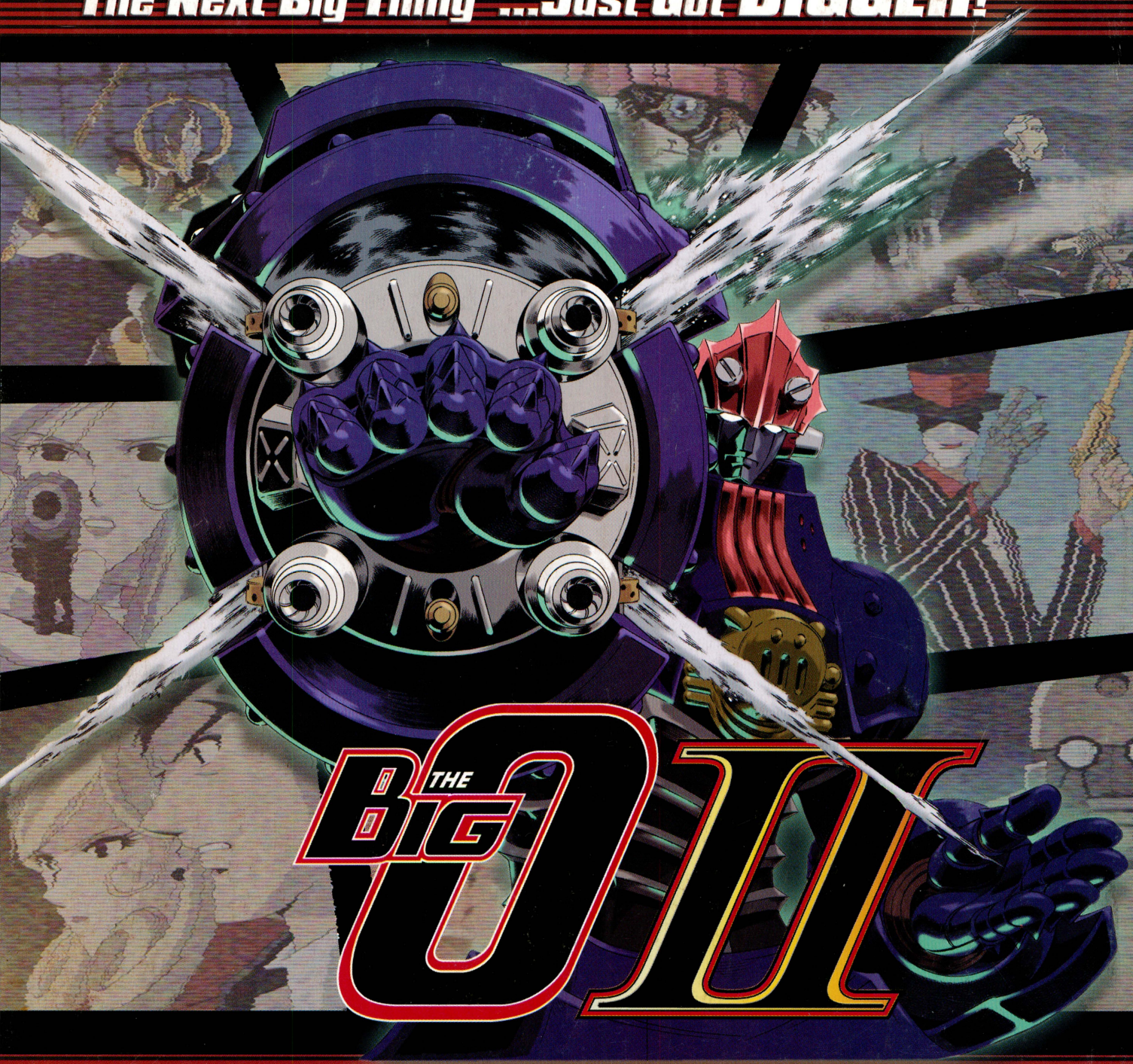
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A Man in Search of His Past
The Next Big Thing ...Just Got BIGGER!



Paradigm City is a city of the past...a city of lost memories. The city is besieged daily by criminals threatening to tear the city apart using huge fighting machines known as a Megadeus. Roger Smith is in search of his past and he has sworn to protect the metropolis from all villiany with the help of one very BIG friend. But as the truths of the past begins to be revealed...he may not like what finds for it is the past that may spell the destruction of everyone living in Paradigm City. Prepare yourself for Season 2 of The Big O. Its time to remember.

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